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THAT WORTHLESS FELLOW PLATONOV

THAT WORTHLESS FELLOW PLATONOV

BY ANTON CHEKHOV

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY JOHN COURNOS

LONDON AND TORONTO
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FOREWORD

The discovery of a hitherto unpublished play by Chekhov must be considered in the nature of a literary event. Although an early piece, with faults which may be ascribed to a novice in the art of playwriting, THAT WORTHLESS FELLOW PLATONOV *has merits which belong to genius. Above all, it is distinguished for qualities characteristically Russian, even though the samovar is conspicuously missing. It is surely valuable for the picture it presents of Russian provincial society before the Revolution, that society which is a curious mixture of primitive emotions and ultra-sophistication. As in most Russian novels and plays with which we are familiar, its men are notoriously weak and the women strong. Anna Petrovna, not less than Platonov,—the Don Juan with a faint heart—is a character who will not be quickly forgotten. The variety of native types who fill the scene is truly remarkable, and the tragic woof is interpenetrated with comic threads in true Chekhovian fashion. You are made to feel that the action proceeds not from accident but from character; it has been said that "character is fate," and, after reading*

this play, the reader must be convinced that Russian character is misfortune. He may cavil at this play's imperfections; he ought to be grateful for a revelation of its snatches of beauty and truth. It is obviously, in spite of its completeness, in an unfinished state; the bracketed portions have been retained, if only to give the student of Chekhov an opportunity to see how the author's mind worked.

J. C.

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CHARACTERS

ANNA PETROVNA VOINITZEV
Widow of General Voinitzev

SERGEY PAVLOVITCH VOINITZEV
Her Step-Son

SOFYA EGOROVNA
His Wife

MIKHAIL VASSILYEVITCH PLATONOV

IVAN IVANOVITCH TRILETZKY

NIKOLAI IVANOVITCH TRILETZKY
A Doctor, His Son

ALEXANDRA IVANOVNA
Platonov's Wife, His Daughter

ABRAHAM ABRAHAMOVITCH VENGEROVITCH (I)
A Jewish Money-Lender

ISAAC ABRAHAMOVITCH VENGEROVITCH (II)
His Son

PORFIRY SEMEONOVITCH GLAGOLYEV (I)
A Rich Old Man

KIRYL PORFIRYEVITCH GLAGOLYEV (II)
His Son

STCHERBOOK
A Neighbour

LIZA AND VERA

His Daughters

PETRIN AND BUGROV

Money-Lenders

MARYA EFIMOVNA GREKOVA

A Young Woman from the Neighbourhood

OSSIP

A Dark Character

YAKOV AND VASSILY

Servants of Voinitzev

KATYA

MARKO

ACT I.

Scene:

A garden. In the foreground a flower-bed and a winding path. In the centre of the flower-bed, a statue. On the head of the statue, a lighted lantern. There are forms, chairs, small tables. To the right, the façade of the house is visible. There are steps leading up to it. The windows are open. From them are audible laughter, conversation, the sounds of a piano and violin. (The quadrille, valses, etc.) In the depth of the garden there is a Chinese summer-house decorated with lanterns. Over its entrance there is a monogram consisting of the letters "S. V." Beyond the summer-house a game of skittles is being played. There is heard the rolling of balls, and outcries: "Five good ones!" "Four poor ones!" etc. The garden and the house are illuminated. Visitors are pacing the garden back and forth, and occasionally a servant is seen. Vassily and Jakov, in black frock coats, drunken, are hanging lanterns and lighting them.

SCENE I.

BUGROV and TRILETZKY (*in a cap with a cockade*).

TRILETZKY (*coming out of the house, arm in arm with Bugrov*). Now, come, Timofey Gordeitch, hand it over! It's little enough to you. It's only a loan I ask!

BUGROV. I swear by God, I can't! Don't humiliate me, Nikolai Ivanitch!

TRILETZKY. Of course you can, Timofey Gordeitch! You can do everything! Why, you can buy and rebuy the world, if you only have a mind to! And it's only a loan I ask! You droll fellow, please understand me! Upon my word of honour, I shan't return the money!

BUGROV. There, do you see? You've just made a serious admission!

TRILETZKY. I see nothing! I only see your lack of feeling. Give me the money, generous man! You won't? You simply must! Must I beg and implore? Surely, you're not as unfeeling as all that? Where's your heart?

BUGROV (*with a sigh*). Oh-h-h, Nikolai Ivanitch! You won't provide a cure, but money you will procure. . . .

TRILETZKY. Well said! (*Sighs.*) You are right.

BUGROV (*taking out his wallet*). You think it right to scoff too. . . . It doesn't take much to send you off into Ha! Ha! Ha! Is it proper to do that? No, you can't say it is. . . . Though I'm not educated as you are, still I've been baptized the same as my learned brother. . . . If I talk stupidly, then you ought to instruct me, and not laugh at me. . . . That's what I think. We moujiks are human beings, though we don't use powder and though our skins are tough. You don't have much to say to us. Excuse me, if I'm blunt. . . . (*He opens his wallet.*) It's the last time, Nikolai Ivanitch. (*He counts.*) One . . . six . . . twelve. . . .

TRILETZKY (*looks into the wallet*). Heavens! And they say Russians haven't any money! Where did you get so much?

BUGROV. Fifty. . . . (*Gives him the money.*) It's the last time.

TRILETZKY. And what's that piece of paper? You'd better hand it over too. . . . It's looking so fondly at me! (*He takes the money.*) You'd better hand it over too!

BUGROV (*giving him more money*). Take it! You're surely greedy, Nikolai Ivanitch!

TRILETZKY. They're all one-rouble notes, so many one-rouble notes. . . . Looks as though you had begged them all. They're not counterfeit, by any chance?

BUGROV. Hand them back to me, if they're counterfeit!

TRILETZKY. I'd hand them back, if you needed them. . . . *Merci,* Timofey Gordeitch! I wish you'd get stouter still, and get a medal. Tell me, Timofey Gordeitch, why do you lead such an abnormal life? You drink a lot, you talk in a bass voice, you sweat, you don't sleep when you ought to. . . . For example, why aren't you asleep right now? You're a full-blooded, splenetic, inflammable sort of man. You ought to go to bed early! Why, you even have more veins than others. Is it right to go on killing oneself as you do?

BUGROV. But . . .

TRILETZKY. But me no buts! Now don't get frightened. . . . I'm joking. It's too early for you to die. . . . You have a good many years left before you! Have you a lot of money, Timofey Gordeitch?

BUGROV. Enough to see me through.

TRILETZKY. You're a good, clever man, Timofey Gordeitch, but a great scoundrel! Excuse me. . . . I say it in friendship. You're my friend, aren't you? Well, you're a great scoundrel! Why do you hold that note against Voinitzev? Why do you give him money?

BUGROV. That needn't concern you, Nikolai Ivanitch!

TRILETZKY. I suppose you and Vengerovitch have an eye on the general's widow's set of chess! The

widow, let me tell you, will take pity on her step-son, she won't let him perish. Do you think she'll give up her chess-men? [You're a scoundrel, a scoundrel!] You're a great man, but a scoundrel! A rogue!

BUGROV. I'll tell you what I'll do, Nikolai Ivanitch. . . . I'll go and have a nap somewhere near the summer-house, and when supper's ready to be served you'll come and wake me.

TRILETZKY. Excellent! Go and have your nap. [And don't forget that you're a scoundrel!]

BUGROV (*goes*). And if they don't serve supper, then wake me at half past ten! (*Goes toward the summer-house.*)

SCENE II.

TRILETZKY and then VOINITZEV.

TRILETZKY (*examining the money*). It smells of a moujik. . . . He's done a lot of fleecing in his day, the rogue! What shall I do with this money? (*To Vassily and Yakov.*) Hey, there, hirelings! Vassily, call Yakov here. And you, Yakov, call Vassily here! Crawl this way! Lively!

YAKOV and VASSILY (*approach Triletzky*).

TRILETZKY. They're in frock-coats! Oh, the deuce take you! You look quite like your masters! (*Gives Yakov a rouble.*) Here's a rouble for you! (*To Vassily.*) And here's a rouble for you! I give it to you because your noses are long.

YAKOV and VASSILY (*bowing to him*). Thank you, Nikolai Ivanitch!

TRILETZKY. Ah, you Slavs, why do you rock like that? Drunk, are you? You look like a couple of ropes. The general's widow will give it to you, when she finds out! You'll catch it across your snouts! (*Gives each another rouble.*) I give it to you because you're called Yakov, and he Vassily, and the other way round! Bow down to me! (*Yakov and Vassily obey.*) It's a fact! And here's another rouble for

each of you because I am called Nikolai Ivanovitch and Ivan Nikolayevitch! (*He gives them the roubles.*) Bow down to me! So! See that you don't spend it in drink! I'll prescribe some bitter medicine for you! You look appallingly like your masters! Go on, and light the lanterns! March! I've had enough of you!

YAKOV and VASSILY (*they leave him*).

VOINITZEV (*he walks across the stage*).

TRILETZKY (*to Voinitzev*). Here's three roubles for you!

VOINITZEV (*takes the money, mechanically putting it into his pocket, and walks away into the depth of the garden*).

TRILETZKY. Aren't you going to thank me? (*Ivan Ivanitch and Sasha come out of the house.*)

SCENE III.

TRILETZKY, IVAN IVANITCH and SASHA.

SASHA (*entering*). My God! When will there be an end to this? And why hast Thou punished me so? This one is drunk, Nikolai is drunk, Misha, too. . . . If you only feared God a little, even if you are not ashamed before men! Everyone looks at you! Do you think it's comfortable for me to see everyone pointing a finger at you?

IVAN IVANITCH. How you are going on! Stop. . . . You've quite confused me. Stop. . . .

SASHA. It's impossible to let you enter a respectable house! No sooner you've come in than you're already drunk! It's indecent! All the more, because you're an old man. You should set them an example, and not drink as though you were one of them!

IVAN IVANITCH. Stop, stop . . . you've confused me. . . . What sort do you think I am? Yes, I shan't lie to you, Sasha. Upon my word, if I had served another five years, I would have been a general! What, you don't think I would have been a general? Fie! . . . (*He laughs.*) I've got the proper character to be a general. And the proper education

too! Don't you understand these things? Ah, you don't understand. That's clear. . . .

SASHA. Let us go! Generals don't drink like this.

IVAN IVANITCH. Everybody drinks from joy! Yes, I could have been a general! Be silent, please; do me the favour! You're your mother all over! Zu-zu-zu . . . I swear by God, she was like that! She went on buzzing away, day and night, day and night. . . . If it wasn't one thing, then it was another. . . . Zu-zu-zu . . . Ah, you don't know me! As for you, my pet, you are your dead mother all over! All of you . . . all. . . . Your eyes, and your hair. . . . And you walk like her, like a little goose. . . . It's terrible how I loved your dead mother! [The Lord has taken her away! Forgive me. Forgive me, Sasha! I didn't guard your mother. . . . I, old clown that I was, let death come to her!]

SASHA. Enough of this. . . . Let us go. Seriously, though, papa . . . it's time for you to leave drink and scandal-mongering alone. Leave it to those healthy bucks. . . . They are young, but it does not become you, an old man. . . .

IVAN IVANITCH. I hear you, my dear! And I understand! [From this minute not a drop! You've issued your commands, and the shade of your mother is on your side.] . . . I hear you. . . . And I shan't do it again. . . . Yes, yes . . . I understand. What sort d'you think I am?

TRILETZKY (*to Ivan Ivanitch*). Your Honour, here are a hundred copecks for you! (*Gives him a rouble.*)

IVAN IVANITCH. So . . . [Young man, aren't you the son of Colonel Triletzky?]

[TRILETZKY. I am he!]

[IVAN IVANITCH. In that case, I'll take it! (*He laughs.*)] I'll take it, my son! *Merci.* . . . I wouldn't take it from a stranger, but I'd always take it from my own son. . . . I'll take it, and make joy of it. . . . I have no love, my children, for the finances of others. God knows, what little love I have for them! I am honest, children! Your father is honest! Not once in my life have I robbed my country or the Penates. And all I had to do to get rich and famous was to slip my hand in somewhere, just a little. [I was in the war . . . thousands, and hundreds of thousands of roubles passed through my hands, but not a copeck would I touch of what belonged to the Russian Empire. . . . I made my salary alone do. . . .]

TRILETZKY. That's praiseworthy, father, but it's not necessary to boast about it.

IVAN IVANITCH. I'm not boasting, Nikolai! I'm sermonizing! Explaining, that's all. . . . I shall answer for you before the Creator!

TRILETZKY. Where are you going now?

IVAN IVANITCH. Home. I'm escorting this dragon-fly. "Take me home," she says, "take me home." . . . She wouldn't let me have any peace. . . . So what

was one to do? She's frightened all alone. I'll escort her home, and come back.

TRILETZKY. By all means, come back. (*To Sasha.*) And shall I give you something too? Of course, you must have something too! Here are three silver roubles for you.

SASHA. Make it five. I want to buy a pair of summer trousers for Misha. He has only one pair. It's disgusting having only one pair! While it's being washed, it's necessary to put on a woollen pair. . . .

TRILETZKY. If I were in your place, I shouldn't let him have either summer ones or woollen ones. I'd let him manage the best he knows how! But what's one to do with you? Well, have your five, if you must have them! (*He gives her the money.*)

IVAN IVANITCH. What sort d'you think I am? Yes . . . I remember. . . . Well, yes . . . I served on the general staff, my children. . . . I used my head against the enemy, I used my brains to spill Turkish blood. . . . I don't know much about the bayonet. . . . Well, yes . . .

SASHA. Why are you stopping? It's time to go. Goodbye, Kolya! Let us go, papa!

IVAN IVANITCH. Stop! Be silent, for Christ's sake! Tar-tar-tar . . . That's how one should live, my children! Honestly, decently, irreproachably. . . . Yes, yes . . . I received the Order of Vladimir of the third degree. . . . [Not the second, the second has a star. . . . The third . . . Here it is . . . on

my neck. . . . Do you see it, Sasha? Here it is. . . . And here is the order of St. Anna, and here of Stanislav. . . . The St. Anne is of the third degree, with swords. . . . Here is the order of Roumania. . . . And here, heaven knows why, is the Persian Lion and Sun. Medals . . . One I received for saving some men from death. . . . It's the silver one. . . . In the sixty-third year I saved the wife of the regimental doctor from drowning by pulling her out of the water by her hair. . . . And there's the military cross of St. George. . . . I received it before Sebastopol, on the very day you, Nicolai, were born.] [The Emperor Alexander Nikolayevitch knew my family. Three times I was sent to the main headquarters during the war. . . . "Long in the service, Triletzky?" . . . "Thirty-one years, Your Imperial Highness!" "It's not for you to salute me. Go, and God be with you!"] [May God grant you the same good fortune, my children. My time is past. Well, enough! . . . Now for a coffin, and for mass. . . . Your old man is all unscrewed, gone to pieces.]

SASHA. You've said enough, papa! Let's go!

TRILETZKY. Even without all this discourse we know the sort of man you are. . . . Now go, take her home!

IVAN IVANITCH. You're a very clever man, Nikolai! As clever as Pirogov!

TRILETZKY. Go, go!

IVAN IVANITCH. That's the sort I am! Yes, I saw

Pirogov too. . . . That was in Kiev. . . . Yes, yes . . . A clever man. . . . Not bad at all. . . . Well, I'm going. . . . Let's go, Sasha. I am not at all what I was. . . . I'm fit only for a funeral. . . . Oh Lord, forgive us sinners! . . . Well, yes . . . I'm a sinner, my children! Now I serve Mammon, but when I was young [I played the rôles of Petchorin and Bazarov], I did not pray to God. . . . No man was more a Bazarov than I. . . . Oh, Lord. . . . Well, yes . . . Pray that I may not die, my children! So you've started, Sasha? Where are you? Oh, there you are. . . . Let's go. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA (*looks into the window*).

TRILETZKY. Why don't you go? You've said an awful lot. . . . Move on! But don't go past the mill, or the dogs will get you.

SASHA. Kolya, you're wearing his cap. Give it to him, or he'll catch a cold.

TRILETZKY (*takes the cap off and puts it on his father's head*). Now, old man . . . left . . . turn about . . . march!

IVAN IVANITCH. Left . . . half turn . . . march! Yes, yes. You're just, Nikolai! God sees that you are just. And your brother-in-law Mikhail is just! He's a free-thinker, but just. I'm coming, coming. . . . (*They go.*) Let's go, Sasha. . . . Are you coming? If you like, I'll carry you!

SASHA. What nonsense!

IVAN IVANITCH. Let me carry you! I always carried

mother. . . . There I would be carrying her, and *myself reeling. . . .* Once we rolled down a hillock together. . . . The dear only laughed, and didn't get angry at all. . . . Come, let me carry you!

SASHA. Don't be silly. . . . Put on your hat properly (*She rearranges his cap.*) Quite a lad, aren't you?

IVAN IVANITCH. Yes, yes . . . (*They go away.*)

(*Enter Petrin and Sticherbook.*)

SCENE IV.

TRILETZKY, PETRIN and STCHERBOOK.

PETRIN (*comes out of the house arm in arm with Stcherbook*). You just put before me fifty thousand roubles, and I'd steal the money. . . . Upon my word, I'd steal it. . . . If only I could do it without being caught . . . I'd steal it. . . . And if the money were put before you, you'd steal it too.

STCHERBOOK. No, I wouldn't, Gerasya! No, not I!

PETRIN. I'd steal even a rouble! Honesty? Bah! Who wants your honesty? An honest man is a fool.

STCHERBOOK. A fool, am I? . . . Well, I'm a fool, then. . . .

TRILETZKY. Here is a rouble a piece for you, old ones! (*Gives them the money.*)

PETRIN (*taking the money*). I'll take it. . . .

STCHERBOOK (*laughing, takes the money*). *Merci*, Mister Doctor!

TRILETZKY. Have you been bibbing, esteemed gentlemen?

PETRIN. A trifle.

TRILETZKY. Well, here's another rouble for you. That's to pay for prayers for your souls. Sinners, aren't you? Take it. Properly, one ought to thumb

one's nose at you, but for the sake of the holiday I'll be generous, the deuce take it! [Here's still another rouble for the pair of you, because both of you put together aren't worth a two-hundredth of this rouble!]

ANNA PETROVNA (*in the window*). Triletzky, give me a rouble too! (*Withdraws from sight.*)

TRILETZKY. I'll give you not one rouble, but five; you being a major general's widow! In a jiffy! (*Goes into the house.*)

PETRIN (*looks at the window*). Has the fairy hidden herself?

STCHERBOOK. Yes, she's hidden herself.

PETRIN. I can't stand her! She's not a good woman. Too much pride. . . . A woman ought to be quiet, respectful. . . . (*He shakes his head.*) Have you seen Glagolyev? Isn't he a scare-crow? He sits like a mushroom on one spot, all silent, staring with his eyes! Is that the way to court the ladies?

STCHERBOOK. He's out to marry one!

PETRIN. He marry? When? A hundred years from now? I most humbly thank you! A hundred years from now wouldn't appeal to me.

STCHERBOOK. What can he, an old man, be thinking of, marrying at his age? [And he wants to marry *her*, what cheek!] If he fancies marrying, why doesn't he marry some simple soul? [What does she want of such a stick for a husband? Never fear, if she marries him, it won't be for love of him. It's his

wealth that'll tempt her. . . . And] he's no match for her. . . . She's young, fiery, an educated European lady. . . .

PETRIN. If he'd only marry! I can't tell how much I'd give to see them married! Why, since the general died—the Kingdom of Heaven be his!—they have almost nothing. She has some mines, but Vengerovitch has his eyes on them. . . . How am I to compete with Vengerovitch? What's the good of my protesting my note now . . . what will I get?

STCHERBOOK. *Nihil.*

PETRIN. But if she'd only marry Glagolyev, then I'd know where to get my money. . . . I'd protest my note, put a distrainer on the property. . . . Never fear, she won't let her step-son lose out, she'll pay up. Ah-h-h! May my dream come to pass! Sixteen thousand, Pavotchka?

STCHERBOOK. And three thousand for me. . . . My worthy spouse has ordered me to get it. . . . How am I to get it? I can't ask for it. It isn't as if they were moujiks. . . . They are friends. . . . Let her go herself and collect the money. . . . Let's go into the wing, Gerasya.

PETRIN. Why?

STCHERBOOK. There are women dancing in there. . . .

PETRIN. And is Dunyasha in the wing?

STCHERBOOK. Yes, she's there. (*They go.*) It'll be

cheerful with them. . . . (*Sings.*) How unhappy am I, no longer living there!

PETRIN. Tick-tock, tick-tock. . . . (*Shouts.*) Ye-s-s! (*Sings.*) The new year joyously we meet in a gathering of friends true. . . . (*Exit.*)

SCENE V.

VOINITZEV and SOFYA (*come out of the depths of the garden*).

VOINITZEV [You don't want to understand the sad position in which I find myself. I am suffering, Sofya! Your cold "yes" and "no" are a source of great unhappiness to me. You neither laugh nor smile, and are always silent as if you were thinking of something else. . . . I am distressed by this mental obsession of yours, which appears to give you no rest. . . .] What are you thinking of?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Honestly, I don't know.

VOINITZEV. You resent my help. . . . Surely, I'm in a position to help you! What are all these secrets, Sofya? Secrets from your husband. . . . H'm . . . (*They sit down.*)

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Secrets? I myself don't know what's happening to me. . . . Don't torment yourself for nothing. Sergey! Don't pay any attention to my spleen. [And forgive me for my "yes" and "no". . . .] (*Pause.*) Let's leave this place, Sergey!

VOINITZEV. Leave this place?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Yes.

VOINITZEV. Why?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. I'd like to. . . . Let's go abroad. Say yes.

VOINITZEV. You'd like that. . . . But why?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. It's very nice here, and gay too, but I can't . . . Everything is quite all right here, only . . . we ought to go. . . . You promised not to cross-examine me.

VOINITZEV. We shall leave tomorrow. Tomorrow will be our last day here. (*Kisses her hand.*) You're bored here! I can understand that too. I understand. The deuce knows, what sort of people are here! The Petrins, the Stcherbooks . . .

SOFYA EGOROVNA. They're not to blame. . . . Let's not think about them. . . . (*Pause.*)

VOINITZEV. Where do you women get all this boredom? Why be bored? (*Kisses his wife's cheek.*) Enough! Cheer up, now! Live while there's life! You ought to take Platonov's recipe for boredom. Oh, that reminds me . . . why don't you chat with him some times? He's an amusing fellow! Have a heart-to-heart talk with him. You'll feel the better for it. And chat with *maman* oftener . . . and with Triletzky. . . . (*He laughs.*) Just chat with them, and don't regard them condescendingly. . . . You may have something to learn from them. . . . I recommend them to you, because they are people to my taste. I love them. You will also learn to love them when you know them better.

ANNA PETROVNA (*from the window*). Sergey! Sergey! Who's there? Call Sergey Pavlovitch!

VOINITZEV. At your service.

ANNA PETROVNA. You there? I want you for a minute.

VOINITZEV. At once. (*To Sofya Egorovna.*) We'll leave here tomorrow, unless you change your mind! (*He enters the house.*)

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*after a pause*). This is a real misfortune! I am already in a state where for days I can't think of my husband. I forget his very existence, and his words have no meaning for me. . . . It's become a burden. . . . What am I to do? (*Becomes thoughtful.*) It's terrible! And it's such a short time since the wedding. . . . It's always that . . . Platonov! I have neither the strength nor the character, nothing, to withstand that man! He follows me around from morning till night, looks for me, does not give me any peace when he gazes at me with his understanding eyes. . . . It's terrible . . . and how stupid! I can't be responsible for myself! If he takes but a single step . . . anything may happen!

SCENE VI.

SOFYA EGOROVNA and PLATONOV.

PLATONOV (*comes out of the house*).

SOFYA EGOROVNA. There he comes! He's glancing round, looking for someone! Whom is he seeking? From his walk I can tell whom he wants to find! It is mean of him to give me no peace.

PLATONOV. I feel hot! It would have been better if I had kept off drink. . . . (*Seeing Sofya Egorovna.*) You here, Sofya Egorovna? All alone? (*Laughs.*)

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Yes.

PLATONOV. Are you avoiding mortals?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. [I don't avoid people, Mikhail Vassilyevitch!] It's not necessary for me to avoid people. I don't find them unpleasant, and they don't worry me.

PLATONOV. Yes? (*Sits down at her side.*) You'll allow me? (*Pause.*) If you're not avoiding people, Sofya Egorovna, why are you avoiding me? Why? Allow me to chat with you! I am glad to have the chance at last of speaking with you. You are avoiding me. What does it mean?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. I never even thought of avoiding you! Where did you get that idea?

PLATONOV. At first you seemed predisposed towards me, and now you don't even seem to want to see me! When I enter a room you go out of it. When I go into the garden, again you go out of it. I begin talking to you, and you show no inclination to go on. . . . Our relations leave me wholly perplexed. . . . Am I to blame? Am I repugnant to you? [You appear to be running away from me as if from the plague. How, do you suppose, it makes me feel?] (*He rises.*) Frankly, I don't feel any guilt. Do try now to save me from this stupid position! I can't stand it any longer!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. I admit I've been avoiding you a little. . . . If I'd known that it caused you any distress, I would have acted differently.

PLATONOV. So you are avoiding me! (*He sits down.*) You admit it? But why . . . what's the reason?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Don't shout, that is . . . don't speak so loudly! I hope you're not reprimanding me. I don't like people to shout at me. I don't strictly avoid you. I only avoid conversations with you. As far as I know, you're a good man. . . . Everyone loves and respects you here. Some even consider you a superior being, and deem it a privilege to exchange a word with you. . . .

PLATONOV. H'm . . .

SOFYA EGOROVNA. When I arrived here . . . it was after our first conversation . . . I eagerly joined your circle of listeners. But somehow, Mikhail Vas-

silyevitch, I could not go on with it. . . . I soon began to think you almost unbearable. . . . Forgive me, if the word sounds harsh to you. . . . You talked to me nearly every day, how once upon a time you had loved me, and how I had loved you, and so forth. . . . The student loved the little girl, the little girl loved the student. . . . It's an old story and rather ordinary. There's little need to attach such significance to it. . . . But that's beside the point. . . . The point is, when you spoke about the past with me, you did it as if you were asking for something, as if in that past you had missed something which you want now. . . . Every time you spoke the tone of your voice was oppressive, but it was always the same. You always seemed to hint of some sort of obligation under which I was bound to you by reason of our mutual past. . . . And you seemed to attach such significance to it. . . . To speak frankly, you want to exceed the proprieties of friendship! You look so strangely, you are angry, you shout, you seize my hand, you follow me around. . . . As if you were spying! What's the object of it all? . . . In a word, you give me no peace. . . . Why this surveillance? What am I to you? Really, one might think that you're waiting for some convenient moment, which for some reason is necessary to you. . . . (*Pause.*)

PLATONOV. Is that all? (*Rises.*) *Merci* for your frankness! (*He goes toward the door.*)

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Are you angry? (*She rises.*) Don't go yet, Mikhail Vassilyevitch! And don't take offence! I didn't want to . . .

PLATONOV (*pausing*). Oh you! I am to conclude not that you're bored with me, but that you're afraid. . . . You are afraid, Sofya Egorovna? (*He approaches her.*)

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Stop it, Platonov! You're lying! I am not afraid!

PLATONOV. Where's your character, where the strength of a healthy mentality, if every banal man you happen to meet seems dangerous for the well-being of your Sergey Pavlovitch? I came here every day and chatted with you because I considered you a sensible understanding woman! What a deep depravity! . . . In any case . . . I am to blame, I was tempted. . . . I had no right to tell you all this. . . . Forgive me for a shameful prank.

SOFYA EGOROVNA. No one gave you the right to say such things! Just because you're listened to, it does not follow that you have the right to say anything that comes to your tongue! Leave me!

PLATONOV (*laughing*). So you're being followed about! You're being sought for! Your hands are being seized! Someone wants to take you, poor thing, from your husband! Platonov, that odd fellow Platonov, is in love with you! What happiness! What bliss! . . . Ridiculous! Hardly the sort of

thing to be expected of an intelligent woman! (*He goes into the house.*)

SOFYA EGOROVNA. You're insolent, Platonov! You're out of your wits! (*She follows him, but stops near the door.*) It's terrible! What made him say all this? He wanted to daze me. . . . No, I won't bear it. . . . I'll go in and tell him . . . (*Goes into the house.*)

(OSSIP *comes out of the summer-house.*)

SCENE VII.

OSSIP, YAKOV and VASSILY.

OSSIP (*entering*). Five good ones! Six poor ones! The devil knows the sort of thing they take up with! Much better if they played a decent card game. . . . (*To Yakov.*) Well, Yasha! Is he . . . h'm . . . Vengerovitch here?

YAKOV. Yes, he's here.

OSSIP. Go call him! On the quiet, like. Tell him there's a big affair on.

YAKOV. Very well. (*Goes into the house.*)

OSSIP (*tears down a lantern and, extinguishing the flame, puts the lantern into his pocket*). During the past year I was in town at Darya Ivanovna's, who buys stolen goods and runs a drinking establishment with girls, and I played cards with her . . . three copecks a go. . . . The fines reached two roubles, but I won eight. . . . (*Tears down another lantern.*) It's cheerful in town!

VASSILY. Those lanterns weren't hung up for your benefit! What's the idea in tearing them down?

OSSIP. I don't even see you! Well, ass, how do you do? How are you getting on? (*Goes up to him.*) How's business? (*Pause.*) Oh, you horse! Oh, you

swine-herd! (*Takes Vassily's hat from his head.*) To look at you is to laugh! Yes, to laugh. Have you but a single drop of brain? (*He throws Vassily's hat on the tree.*) Why don't you hit me across the cheek for being a noxious fellow?

VASSILY. Let someone else hit you, but not I!

OSSIP. Maybe you'd like to kill me? If you've got any brains you wouldn't get your crowd to kill me, you'd kill me yourself! Spit into my face, if you will, because I'm a noxious fellow!

VASSILY. I shan't spit. Why don't you let me alone?

OSSIP. Aren't you going to spit at me? That means you're afraid of me! Then get down on your knees before me! (*Pause.*) Well? Get down on your knees, I tell you! Whom am I talking to? To the walls or to a live man? (*Pause.*) Whom am I talking to?

VASSILY (*falling to his knees*). It's a sin against yourself, Ossip Ivanitch.

OSSIP. Aren't you ashamed to be on your knees? Well, it pleases me mightily. . . . Here's a gentleman in a frock coat, and he's on his knees before a ruffian. . . . Now shout hurrah, if you've the spirit left. . . . Well? (*Enter Vengerovitch I.*)

SCENE VIII.

OSSIP and VENGEROVITCH I.

VENGEROVITCH I (*comes out of the house*). Who called me?

OSSIP (*quickly taking his hat off*). It's I, Your Worship!

VASSILY (*rises to his feet, then sits down on a form and weeps*).

VENGEROVITCH I. What do you want?

OSSIP. You made inquiries for me at the tavern. So here I've come.

VENGEROVITCH I. To be sure. Couldn't you find a better place?

OSSIP. For good people, Your Excellency, every place is good.

VENGEROVITCH I. I have need of you. . . . Let's go elsewhere. There's a form over there. (*They go to the form standing in the depth of the scene.*) Stand a little way off from me, so that it won't look as if you talked with me. . . . Thus! Did the tavern-keeper, Liov Solomonitch, send you here?

OSSIP. Quite so.

VENGEROVITCH I. Really . . . it's not you I wanted,

but . . . well, what's one to do? I shouldn't like dealing with you. . . . You're such a wicked man. . . .

OSSIP. Very wicked! The worst on earth. [Abram Abramitch, you surely aren't in want of good people!]

VENGEROVITCH I. Not so loud, please! It's terrible how much money I've given you! You don't seem to appreciate it any more than if it were a stone or some useless object. . . . You allow yourself such insolences, and you're always thieving. . . . So you turn away? The truth doesn't please you?

OSSIP. I'm not worried about your truth, Your Excellency. Did you call me here only to lecture me?

VENGEROVITCH I. Not so loud, please! . . . Do you know Platonov?

OSSIP. The teacher? Why shouldn't I know him?

VENGEROVITCH I. Yes, the teacher. The teacher who teaches only how to abuse. How much will you take to cripple this same teacher?

OSSIP. What d'you mean, cripple him?

VENGEROVITCH I. I don't want you to kill him, but only cripple him. . . . It isn't necessary to kill people. . . . Why kill them? Murder is such a . . . well . . . But to cripple is to beat him up so that he'll remember it for the rest of his life. . . .

OSSIP. I can manage that.

VENGEROVITCH I. Just break a bone or two. Put a blemish or two on his face. . . . How much will you take? Tsss . . . Someone's coming. . . . Let's go a little farther . . . (*They go into the depth of the scene. Platonov and Grekova come out of the house.*)

SCENE IX.

VENGEROVITCH I and OSSIP (*in the depth of scene*), PLATONOV and GREKOVA.

PLATONOV (*laughing*). What, what? How? Have I heard aright?

GREKOVA. Heard aright? I'll repeat it if you like. . . . I'll express myself even more emphatically. . . . Your feelings will not be outraged, of course . . . you're so used to all sorts of indignities that my words will scarcely prove a novelty to you. . . .

PLATONOV. Speak them, speak them, my beauty!

GREKOVA. I'm not a beauty. He who considers me a beauty is lacking in taste. . . . Do you really consider me beautiful? Speak frankly.

PLATONOV. I'll tell you later. . . . You speak first what you have to say!

GREKOVA. Listen then . . . You're either an extraordinary man, or . . . a worthless wretch . . . one of the two.

PLATONOV (*laughs*).

GREKOVA. Go on laughing! It's a laughing matter. (*Laughs.*)

PLATONOV (*still laughing*). To think that she said it!

You little silly! Go on speaking! (*Puts his arm round her waist.*)

GREKOVA (*sitting down*). Allow me to . . .

PLATONOV. To think that she goes among other people! She philosophizes, is occupied with chemistry, and makes such utterances! (*Kisses her.*) What a handsome, original creature!

GREKOVA. Allow me to . . . But I did not say . . . (*She rises and sits down again.*) Why do you kiss me? I did not . . .

PLATONOV. You said it, and what you said was astonishing. Isn't it what you intended? Let him see what a clever girl I am! (*Kisses her.*) Look how abashed she is . . . Ah!

GREKOVA. You . . . Do you love me? Yes? Yes?

PLATONOV (*in a piping voice*). And do you love me?

GREKOVA. If . . . if . . . that is . . . yes . . . (*Weeps.*) Do you love me? You couldn't have done this otherwise. . . . Do you love me?

PLATONOV. Not a drop, my beauty! But I love little fools, sinner that I am! I love a fool of a girl, and that only from having nothing better to do. Oh, you've grown pale! And there's a gleam in your eyes! Know, then, our kind!

GREKOVA (*rises from her seat*). Are you making mock of me? (*Pause.*)

PLATONOV. She's ready to smack my face. . . .

GREKOVA. I am proud. . . . I wouldn't soil my hands. . . . I've just told you, dear sir, that you're

either an extraordinary man or a wretch. Now I can tell you that I think you an extraordinary wretch! I detest you! (*Goes toward the house.*) I'll not repay you now. . . . I'm glad to find out the sort of bird you are. . . . (*Enter Triletzky.*)

SCENE X.

The SAME and TRILETZKY (*in a top-hat*).

TRILETZKY (*comes in*). What a noise the cranes are making! Where do they come from? (*Looks above.*) So early . . .

GREKOVA. Nikolai Ivanitch, if you respect me or yourself even a little, you will refuse to know this man! (*Points to Platonov.*)

TRILETZKY (*laughing*). Have mercy! This is my most esteemed relative.

GREKOVA. And friend?

TRILETZKY. And friend.

GREKOVA. I don't envy you. I don't envy him either. You're a decent man, but . . . this jesting tone . . . There are times when one is fed up with your jokes. . . . I don't want to hurt your feelings, but I feel humiliated, and you go on jesting! (*She weeps.*) I'm humiliated . . . but I'm proud. Know this man, then . . . love him . . . bow down before his mind . . . fear him. . . . You all appear to see in him a likeness to Hamlet. . . . Well, go on taking pleasure in him! That's none of my affair. . . . I don't expect anything from you. . . .

Go on jesting with him to your heart's content . . . with this worthless wretch! (*Goes into the house.*)

TRILETZKY (*after a pause*). Did you eat her up?

PLATONOV. I ate nothing. . . .

TRILETZKY. It's time, Mikhail Vassilyitch, in all honour, in all conscience, you left her in peace. Upon my word, it's shameful. You're such a big, such a clever man, yet are up to such pranks. . . . There, she called you a worthless wretch. . . . (*Pause.*) How am I to divide myself in halves, one half of which is to respect you and the other to sympathize with the girl who called you a worthless wretch?

PLATONOV. Don't respect me, so it won't be necessary for you to divide yourself in halves. . . .

TRILETZKY. But I can't help respecting you! You don't know what you are saying.

PLATONOV. There remains the alternative: don't sympathize with her. I don't understand you, Nikolai! You're a clever man . . . what good have you found in the little fool?

TRILETZKY. H'm . . . The general's widow has often reproached me for my deficiency as a gentleman, and has always pointed you out to me as a model of what a gentleman should be. . . . And, in my opinion, this reproach might be particularly aimed at you. . . . Let me ask you: is it the act of a gentleman to cry at the street corners that I'm in

love with her? And you laugh at me, mock me, spy on me. . . .

PLATONOV. Express yourself more clearly.

TRILETZKY. I think I've expressed myself clearly enough. And, to my face, you've called her fool, riff-raff . . . and you call yourself a gentleman! Gentlemen know that people in love have a certain *amour propre*. . . . She's no fool, brother! She's no fool! She's a needless sacrifice, that's what she is! There are moments when one has the desire to hate someone, to annoy someone, to hurt and offend someone. . . . Why not try it on her? She is handy! And she is frail, silent, and looks at you so trustingly. . . . I understand all this very well. . . . (*He rises.*) Come, let's have a drink!

OSSIP (*to Vengerovitch*). If you don't give me the rest of the money then, I'll steal a hundred. Never fear, I'll do it!

VENGEROVITCH I (*to Ossip*). Not so loud, please! When you are laying it on, don't forget to say to him, "You grateful tavern-keeper!" Sh-h . . . No, off with you! (*He goes into the house.*)

OSSIP (*goes away*).

TRILETZKY. The devil take it! Abram Abramitch! (*To Vengerovitch.*) Abram Abramitch, you're not ill?

VENGEROVITCH I. It's nothing. . . . Thank God, I'm well.

TRILETZKY. What a pity! And I need money so badly! Don't you believe me? I'm in the last extremity.

VENGEROVITCH I. It follows, doctor, that you need patients in the last extremity? (*Laughs.*)

TRILETZKY. A clever jest. But a hard one to swallow! Ha! Ha! Ha! And again Ha! Ha! Ha! Laugh, Platonov! Do laugh, if you can manage it!

VENGEROVITCH I. As it is, doctor, you owe me money.

TRILETZKY. Why say it? Who doesn't know it? How much do I owe you?

VENGEROVITCH I. Let's see . . . Oh, yes. Two hundred and forty-five roubles, I think.

TRILETZKY. Lend me some money, generous man! Oblige me, and I'll oblige you some day. Come, be good, and generous, and brave! The bravest Jew is one who gives loans without a note! Be the bravest Jew, Abram Abramitch!

VENGEROVITCH I. H'm . . . Jew . . . It's Jews this, and Jews that. . . . I assure you, gentlemen, during my whole life I've not met a single Russian who gave money without a note. And I assure you that nowhere more than among dishonest Jews is there such a wide practice of lending of money without a note! . . . May God kill me on the spot, if I lie! (*He sighs.*) You young people might learn a great deal, with profit to yourselves, from us Jews, and especially from old Jews. . . . A great deal, in-

deed . . . (*He takes a wallet from his pocket.*) You accept money with eagerness and pleasure, and then you love to make a jest about it. . . . It isn't right, gentlemen! I'm an old man . . . I have children. . . . You think me a scoundrel, yet you expect me to act like a human being. . . . Is that why you've gone to the university? . . .

TRILETZKY. You express yourself well, Abram Abramitch!

VENGEROVITCH I. No, not well, gentlemen, but badly. . . . One might think that between you, cultured folk, and my clerks there's no difference. . . . How much do you want?

TRILETZKY. As much as you'll give. . . . (*Pause.*)

VENGEROVITCH I. I can give you fifty rubles. . . . (*Hands over the money.*)

TRILETZKY. That's excellent! (*Takes the money.*)

VENGEROVITCH I. Doctor, you're wearing my hat!

TRILETZKY. Yours, is it? H'm . . . (*Takes the hat off.*) There, take it. . . . Why don't you have it cleaned? It won't cost much. How's top-hat in Hebrew?

VENGEROVITCH I. As you like. (*Puts his hat on.*)

TRILETZKY. D'you know, a top-hat becomes you. You look quite like a baron! Why don't you buy yourself a baronetcy?

VENGEROVITCH I. I don't know anything! Let me be in peace!

TRILETZKY. You're great! Why don't they want to understand you?

VENGEROVITCH I. Why don't they want to let me be in peace, that's what I'd like to know! (*Goes into the house.*)

SCENE XI.

PLATONOV and TRILETZKY.

PLATONOV. Why did you take this money from him?
TRILETZKY. Just so . . . (*He sits down.*)
PLATONOV. What do you mean; just so?
TRILETZKY. I've taken it, isn't that enough? You're not sorry for him?
PLATONOV. That has nothing to do with it!
TRILETZKY. What then?
PLATONOV. You don't know?
TRILETZKY. No, I don't.
PLATONOV. You lie, you do know! (*Pause.*) [There are people in this world, my dear fellow, who won't light a cigarette, speak nonsense to a woman, put a boot on, without first having looked into his regulations. . . . Their regulations are everything to them . . . And they'll depart into the next life according to such and such paragraph. . . . They're dry, these pedants, and they never take a step anywhere without their regulations. . . . But . . .] For such beings as you, rules are as essential as daily bread. . . . (*Pause.*)
TRILETZKY. I don't know anything. . . . Not for us, brother, [such is God's judgment] is it given to re-

form our flesh! Not for us to overcome it. . . . I knew this even while I was a student with you in high school and received such low marks for my Latin. . . . Let's not waste time talking nonsense. . . . Come, let's have a drink!

PLATONOV. No. It's stifling in there.

TRILETZKY. Then I'll go alone. (*Stretches himself.*) By the way, what do those letters "S. V." stand for? Sofya Voinitzev or Sergey Voinitzev? Whom did our philologist wish to honour with those letters . . . himself or his wife?

PLATONOV. It's his money that's paying for this! [I'm astonished at the careless way the Voinitzevs are spending their money. The fireworks must cost at least twenty-five roubles, the champagne a hundred, the wine and the vodka another hundred. . . . In short, three hundred roubles will pay for this hateful evening. Three hundred roubles! They must have borrowed five hundred from Vengerovitch. . . . Three hundred squandered tonight. . . . As for the rest, Sergey will probably buy himself a bicycle or his wife a watch. . . .]

[TRILETZKY. They are planning an amateur spectacle.

PLATONOV. Of course! They'll want a hundred and fifty for decorations alone. . . . And they are up to the hilt in debt. . . . The general's widow will surely have to give up her mines to Vengerovitch! They're playing all sorts of pranks with the es-

tate. . . . It's sad and pitiful, all the more as they pass for clever people!]

TRILETZKY. Yes. . . . What's happening to the widow tonight? She laughs, sighs, and kisses everyone. . . . It's as if she were in love. . . .

PLATONOV. Whom possibly can she find to love here? Herself, perhaps. Don't believe in her laughter. It's impossible to believe in the laughter of a clever woman who never weeps. Take my word for it: our widow is not so anxious to weep as to shoot herself. It is evident in her eyes. . . .

TRILETZKY. Women don't take to shooting, they prefer poison as a way out. . . . But we won't philosophize. . . . When I philosophize I lie terribly. . . . A fine little woman is our widow! In general, I have abominable thoughts when I look at a woman. But this is the one woman who banishes my worst thoughts. The one woman . . . When I look on her genuine face, I begin to believe in platonic love. Are you coming?

PLATONOV. No.

TRILETZKY. Then I'll go alone. . . . I'll have a drink with the priest. . . . (*He goes, and runs into Glagolyev II in the doorway.*) Ah! Your Excellency, self-made count! Here's three roubles for you! (*Sticks three roubles into his hands and goes in.*)

SCENE XII.

PLATONOV and GLAGOLYEV II.

GLAGOLYEV II. A strange character! Three roubles . . . for no reason at all. (*Shouts.*) I can give you three roubles myself! H'm . . . What an idiot! (*To Platonov.*) He shocks me terribly with his stupidity. (*Laughs.*) He's stupid to indecency!

PLATONOV. Well, dancer, why aren't you dancing?

GLAGOLYEV II. Dance? Here? With whom, allow me to ask? (*Sits at Platonov's side.*)

PLATONOV. Isn't there anybody to dance with?

GLAGOLYEV II. What types! Who wants to look at them! What phizes, with hooked noses . . . and how affected! . . . As for the ladies . . . (*Laughs.*) [Small-pox and chalk, instead of powder . . .] The devil knows what! In the presence of such a crowd, I always prefer the buffet to dancing. (*Pause.*) What a foul air one finds here in Russia! What a rank, stifling air . . . I can't bear Russia! . . . What boorishness, stench . . . Brrr . . . Have you ever been in Paris?

PLATONOV. No.

GLAGOLYEV II. What a pity! In any case, you still have a chance. When you intend going there, then

tell me. I will reveal all the secrets of Paris to you. I will give you three hundred letters of introduction and three hundred ardent French cocottes into your charge. . . .

PLATONOV. Thank you. I am sated, as it is. Tell me, is it true your father intends buying Platonovka?

GLAGOLYEV II. Really, I don't know. I don't concern myself with commerce. . . . Have you noticed how *mon père* pays attention to the general's widow? (*Laughs.*) There's another type for you! The old badger wants to marry! [I'll rid him of his desire!] He's as stupid as a hen! As for the widow, she is *charmante!* Not bad-looking at all! (*Pause.*) She's such a dear, such a dear . . . And her form! Fi-fi! (*Slaps Platonov on the shoulder.*) Lucky man! She draws herself rather tight in the waist, eh?

PLATONOV. I don't know. I am never present at her toilet.

GLAGOLYEV II. I've been told . . . Surely, you . . .

PLATONOV. You, Count, are an idiot.

GLAGOLYEV II. I only joked . . . Why get angry? You are certainly an odd fellow! (*In a low voice.*) Is it true what they say that she . . . Rather a delicate question, but I presume, between ourselves . . . Is it true what they say that she sometimes loves money and drink?

PLATONOV. You'd better ask her.

GLAGOLYEV II. Ask her? (*Laughs.*) What an idea!

PLATONOV (*changing his seat to another form*). What a master you are at tiring one!

GLAGOLYEV II (*laughing*). Really, suppose I should ask her! Why not?

PLATONOV. To be sure. (*Aside.*) Just ask! She'll slap your stupid cheeks for you! (*To him.*) Yes, ask!

GLAGOLYEV II (*jumping to his feet*). I swear, it's a great idea! A thousand devils! Of course, I'll ask, and I give you my word, Platonov, that she's mine! I have a presentiment! Indeed, I'll ask her at once! I'll wager you, she's mine! (*Runs toward the house and, in the doorway, runs into Anna Petrovna and Triletzky.*) *Mille pardons, madame!* (*Bows to her and exit.*)

(*Platonov resumes his old place.*)

SCENE XIII.

PLATONOV, ANNA PETROVNA and TRILETZKY.

TRILETZKY (*on the steps*). There he sits, our great sage and philosopher! He sits, and with impatience he awaits his prey: to whom he might read a lecture on some future dream!

ANNA PETROVNA. Does he bite?

TRILETZKY. Little, I fear. He doesn't seem to be up to much tonight! Poor moralist! I'm sorry for you, Platonov! However, I am drunk and . . . well . . . the priest is waiting for me. Good-bye! (*Goes away.*)

ANNA PETROVNA (*approaching Platonov*). Why do you sit here?

PLATONOV. It's stifling in the house, and this good sky is better than a ceiling whitewashed by women!

ANNA PETROVNA (*sitting down*). What lovely weather! The air is clear, cool, and here are the stars and the moon! It's too bad, ladies aren't allowed to sleep out-of-doors under the sky. When I was a little girl, during the summer I used to sleep in the garden. (*Pause.*) Is that a new neck-tie you have on?

PLATONOV. Yes, it's a new one. . . . (*Pause.*)

ANNA PETROVNA. I feel in a strange mood tonight.

. . . Everything seems to please me. . . . Why don't you say something, Platonov? Why are you silent? I've come here especially to hear you talk. . . .

PLATONOV. What do you want me to say?

ANNA PETROVNA. Tell me something new, something good, something piquant. . . . Really, it seems to me I'm in love with you more than ever tonight. You're such a dear tonight!

PLATONOV. And you're such a beauty tonight. . . . Indeed, you're always a beauty!

ANNA PETROVNA. We are friends, Platonov, aren't we?

PLATONOV. Without doubt . . . even great friends. . . . I feel strongly attached to you. . . . It would take a long time to lose the feeling I have for you. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. So we really are great friends?

PLATONOV. Why all this questioning? Drop it, dear! Of course, we are friends. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. Good. . . . We are friends. But do you realize that from friendship between man and woman to love is but a single step? (*Laughs.*)

PLATONOV. So that's how it is! (*Laughs.*) Why do you say it? Well, you and I won't take a step toward the imps no matter what a long step we take. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. The imps. . . . What a comparison! Lucky for you your wife doesn't hear you. . . .

But, really, why shouldn't we take the step? Aren't we human? Love is good. . . . Why blush?

PLATONOV (*looks intently at her*). I see that you're having a pleasant little joke . . . or that you just enjoy talking. . . . Come, let's have a waltz together!

ANNA PETROVNA. You can't dance! (*Pause.*) I've got to have it out with you. . . . It's about time. . . . (*Looks round.*) Just try to listen to me, *mon cher.* You must hear me out and not try to philosophize!

PLATONOV. Come, Anna Petrovna, let's have a dance!

ANNA PETROVNA. Let's sit down a little farther from here. . . . Over there! (*They sit down on another form.*) Only I don't know where to begin. You're such an awkward deceitful creature!

PLATONOV. Hadn't I better be the one to begin?

ANNA PETROVNA. You'll begin with such twaddle, Platonov! Well, say on then! He's already confused! I'll believe you . . . don't rely on that! (*She slaps Platonov on the shoulder.*) Jester Misha! Well, say on. . . . Only be brief. . . .

PLATONOV. I'll be brief. . . . Here's what I want to say to you: why? (*Pause.*) Upon my word, it isn't worth it, Anna Petrovna!

ANNA PETROVNA. Why not? You'd better hear me. . . . You don't understand me. . . . If you were free, without further thought I should become your wife and give My Excellency into your eternal keeping, but now . . . Well? Silence means assent,

doesn't it? (*Pause.*) Listen, Platonov, if you agree, it isn't right that you should remain silent!

PLATONOV. Let's forget this conversation, Anna Petrovna! For Heaven's sake, let us act as if it hadn't taken place!

ANNA PETROVNA (*shrugging*). You strange man! But why?

PLATONOV. Because I respect you! I respect my respect for you so deeply that I should be sorry to part with it! My friend, I'm a free man, I'm not opposed to having a good time, I'm not opposed to forming an intimacy with a woman, I'm not even opposed to well-conducted petty intrigues, but . . . to carry on a petty intrigue with you, to make you the object of my frivolous fancies, you, an intelligent, a handsome, a free woman. . . . No! That's too much to expect of me! Far better banish me out of your sight! To live stupidly together a month or two, then shamefacedly part company . . . it's not to my liking!

ANNA PETROVNA. We are talking of love!

PLATONOV. Don't I love you? You are good, intelligent and merciful . . . and I love you . . . I love you desperately, fiercely! I'll give up my life for you, if you want me to! I love you as a woman . . . human being! Surely every love need not be subjected to the well-known rôle which love usually plays! My love is a thousand times dearer to me than that love which now agitates your mind!

ANNA PETROVNA (*rising*). Go, my dear, have a good sleep! When you have had your sleep, we shall have another talk.

PLATONOV. We'd better forget this conversation. . . . (*Kisses her hand.*) Let us be friends, but we shan't sport with one another . . . we shall bring the best of us in relation with one another! . . . Quite apart from this, I am married, if only a little . . . Let's drop this talk, and let everything go on as it was before!

ANNA PETROVNA. Go, my dear, go! Married . . . But you love me? Why drag in your wife here? March! We'll have another talk later, perhaps a couple of hours from now. . . . At this moment you are suffering from an attack of deceit.

PLATONOV. I can't deceive. (*Whispers in her ear.*) If I could deceive, I should have been your lover long ago. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA (*sharply*). Get out!

PLATONOV. You are lying, you are not angry. . . . You only . . . (*Goes into the house.*)

ANNA PETROVNA. What an odd human being! (*Sits down.*) He himself doesn't realize what he is saying. . . . "Every love need not be subjected to the well-known rôle which love usually plays. . . ." What nonsense! Sounds like the love of an author toward an authoress. . . . (*Pause.*) What an unbearable man! [Why, he knows that I love him, and he knows that he loves me. . . . He can't breathe without me.

. . . But no! It's necessary to make a display, a show of oneself, to do a bit of coquetting with the tongue! He carries his respect about as a musician his fiddle! He doesn't like looking simply at things, but must start off with a preface.] And so, my dear friend, we'll babble on like this until Judgment Day! As I haven't taken you by favour, I shall take you by force . . . this very night! It's time we both ended this stupid expectant situation. . . . I'm tired of it! I'll take by force. . . . Who comes there? Glagolyev . . . he's looking for me. . . . (*Enter Glagolyev I.*)

SCENE XIV.

ANNA PETROVNA and GLAGOLYEV I.

GLAGOLYEV I. How tedious! These people are saying the same things I heard years ago; they think the thoughts I thought in my childhood. . . . Everything is old, nothing new. . . . I'll have a chat with her, then I'll leave this place.

ANNA PETROVNA. What are you mumbling about, Porfiry Semeonitch? Please tell me!

GLAGOLYEV I. You here? (*Goes to her.*) I'm cursing myself for being superfluous here. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. Not because you're not like us? . . . Well, people become reconciled to roaches, and you must become reconciled to our folk here! Sit down, please, and we'll have a chat!

GLAGOLYEV I. I was looking for you, Anna Petrovna! I must have a talk with you about something. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. By all means . . .

GLAGOLYEV I. The fact is . . . I would like to learn the answer to my . . . letter. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. H'm . . . What do you want from me, Porfiry Semeonitch?

GLAGOLYEV I. D'you know, I renounce . . . any rights as a husband. . . . I'm not out for rights! I

want a friend, a clever housewife. . . . I have a paradise, but there are no angels in it.

ANNA PETROVNA. I often put the question to myself, what could I do in paradise? I'm a human being, and not an angel!

GLAGOLYEV I. Can you tell what you're going to do in paradise any more than you can tell what you're going to do tomorrow? A good person will find work to do anywhere, whether on earth or in heaven. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. All this is very lovely, but would my existence with you be worth what I should receive for it? Excuse me, Porfiry Semeonitch, but your proposition seems rather a strange one to me. . . . Why should you marry? Why should you want a friend in a skirt? It's none of my business, of course! But as it's gone this far, I may as well finish. If I were as old as you, and had as much money, sense and truth as you have, I should not seek anything on this earth, except the common good . . . that is to say, I should seek nothing except the gratification of my love toward my neighbour. . . .

GLAGOLYEV I. I am unable to fight for the common good of men. . . . One needs to have ability and a strong will for that, and God did not grant them to me. I was born only to love great deeds and to achieve a heap of petty ones, good for nothing . . . only to love! Come to me!

ANNA PETROVNA. No. Don't speak any more of this. And don't attach any grave significance to my re-

fusal. . . . Vanity, my friend! If we possessed all that we loved, there would be no room for all our possessions. . . . That means, those who refuse are not always stupid or unfriendly. (*Laughs.*) There's some philosophy for you for dessert! What's all that din about? Do you hear it? Most likely it's Platonov raising a racket. . . . What a character! (*Enter Grekova and Triletzky.*)

SCENE XV.

ANNA PETROVNA, GLAGOLYEV I, GREKOVA and TRILETZKY.

GREKOVA (*entering*). It's the worst humiliation yet! (*Weeps.*) The worst yet! Only depraved people could look on in silence!

TRILETZKY. I believe you, but what could I do? What could I do? I couldn't attack him with a log, now could I?

GREKOVA. You should have used a log if you could find no other means! Go away from me! I . . . I, a woman, wouldn't have remained silent had I seen you treated so shabbily and abominably as I've been treated.

TRILETZKY. But I . . . him . . . Look at it sensibly! How am I to blame?

GREKOVA. You're a coward, that's what you are! Go, I don't want to see you! Go to your nasty buffet! Good-bye! Don't make any effort to see me again! We're not necessary to one another. . . . Good-bye!

TRILETZKY. Please don't take it so! I am sick of it all! Tears, tears . . . Oh, my God! How my head goes round. . . . *Coenurus cerebralis!* Ah-h . . .

(*He makes a helpless gesture with his hand and walks away.*)

GREKOVA. *Coenurus cerebralis.* . . . (*Goes.*) He humiliated me. . . . Why? What have I done?

ANNA PETROVNA (*walking up to her*). Marya Efimovna . . . I am not keeping you. . . . I myself should have left had I been in your place. . . . (*Kisses her.*) Don't cry, my dear. . . . Most women have been created to suffer all sorts of nastiness from men. . . .

GREKOVA. But not I. . . . I will . . . get even with him! He'll not be a teacher here any longer! Tomorrow I'm going to the director of the national schools. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. Enough. . . . I'll come and see you within a day or two, and you and I will discuss Platonov. In the meantime, calm yourself. . . . Stop crying. . . . You will have your satisfaction. . . . Don't be angry at Triletzky, my dear. . . . He did not defend you because he is too good and soft. Such people are incapable of defence. . . . What did he do to you?

GREKOVA. He kissed me in the presence of all . . . called me a fool and . . . and . . . threw me on the table. . . . You needn't think he'll escape unpunished. He is either mad, or else . . . I'll show him! (*Goes away.*)

ANNA PETROVNA (*after her*). Good-bye! We'll see each other soon! (*To Yakov.*) Yakov! Get the

carriage ready for Marya Efimovna! . . . Ah, Platonov, Platonov . . . He'll get into hot water one day. . . .

GLAGOLYEV I. A lovely girl! Our good Mikhail Vassilyitch doesn't like her much. . . . He's hurt her feelings. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. Nothing serious! Today he hurts her feelings, and tomorrow he'll beg her pardon. . . . There's a noble chord there! (*Enter Glagolyev II.*)

SCENE XVI.

The SAME and GLAGOLYEV II.

GLAGOLYEV II (*aside*). With her! Again with her! The devil knows where it's going to end! (*Looks fixedly at his father.*)

GLAGOLYEV I (*after a pause*). What do you want?

GLAGOLYEV II. You're sitting here, while they're looking for you there! Go, they're calling you!

GLAGOLYEV I. Who's calling me?

GLAGOLYEV II. The folks inside!

GLAGOLYEV I. Of course, it's the folks. . . .(*Rises.*) As you like, but I shan't give you any peace, Anna Petrovna! You'll say something else when you understand me! . . . (*Goes into the house.*)

SCENE XVII.

ANNA PETROVNA and GLAGOLYEV II.

GLAGOLYEV II (*sitting down at Anna Petrovna's side*). He's an old badger! Ass! No one called him! I've fooled him!

ANNA PETROVNA. When you get some sense, you'll reproach yourself for your father.

GLAGOLYEV II. You're joking. . . . I'll tell you why I've come. . . . I want just two words with you. . . . Yes or no?

ANNA PETROVNA. That is?

GLAGOLYEV II (*laughing*). As if you hadn't understood! Yes or no!

ANNA PETROVNA. I tell you I don't understand you!

GLAGOLYEV II. You'll soon understand. . . . With the help of gold everything can be understood. . . . If "yes," then will it suit the convenience of you the generalissimo of my soul to stick your hand into my pocket and extract therefrom my wallet filled with papa's money? . . . (*He thrusts his side pocket forward.*)

ANNA PETROVNA. Rather frank. . . . [Oh, you idiot, idiot!] Do you know, the cleverest people get their faces slapped for such speeches!

GLAGOLYEV II. Even a slap in the face is pleasant when it comes from a charming woman. . . . First the slap, then, after a while, the "yes." . . .

ANNA PETROVNA (*rising*). Take your hat and leave this instant!

GLAGOLYEV II (*rising*). Where?

ANNA PETROVNA. Where you please! Only go and don't show your face here again!

GLAGOLYEV II. Fie . . . Why get angry? I shan't go, Anna Petrovna!

ANNA PETROVNA. In that case I'll have you removed! (*Goes into house.*)

GLAGOLYEV II. What an angry woman! And I haven't said anything in particular. . . . What have I said? Certainly nothing to cause any anger. . . . (*Follows her.*)

SCENE XVIII.

PLATONOV and SOFYA EGOROVNA (*coming out of the house*).

PLATONOV. To this day I am one who has no place . . . only the place of a school teacher. . . . That's what's happened since we parted last! (*They sit down.*) [My golden years are gone from me forever! I've wasted them on filthy trifles. . . . (I've buried everything in a grave, except this body.)] I won't speak of other people, but what have I done for myself? What have I sown in myself, nourished and developed? . . . And now! Oh, what terrible deformity. . . . How revolting! Evil seethes round me, defiles the earth, swallows my brothers in Christ; while I sit with folded arms, as after heavy labour; I sit, look and am silent. . . . I am twenty-seven years old, for thirty years longer I shall be like this. . . . I see no prospect of change! . . . only a fat dressing-gown existence, stupefaction, a complete indifference to everything, a life that is more death than life! A wasted life! My hair stands on end when I think of this death! (*Pause.*) How shall I raise myself, Sofya Egorovna? You are silent, you don't know. . . . How can you know? Sofya Egor-

ovna, don't think I'm sorry for myself! [I'm too near the time when I shall decide that I'm an irretrievably lost man!] To the devil with this me! But what's become of you? Where is your pure soul, your frankness, truthfulness, boldness? Where your health? What have you done with it all, Sofya Egorovna? To waste whole years in idleness, to live on the labour of others, to take pleasure in the suffering of others, and at the same time to be able to look one straight in the eyes . . . that is depravity!

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*rises*).

PLATONOV (*forces her to sit down*). Stop! One more word. What has made you affected, lazy, free with words? Who has taught you to lie? [Who gave you the right to spend whole days in discussing labour, suffering, freedom, if you are doing nothing for them and have no intention of doing anything?] And how were you before? Allow me to finish! I'll soon let you go! . . . How good you were, Sofya Egorovna, how great! There's yet time, my dear, to rise above all this. Think it over! gather your strength together and rise, for God's sake! (*He seizes her hand.*) My dear, tell me frankly, for the sake of our common past, what made you marry this man? What tempted you to it?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. He's a splendid man.

PLATONOV. Why say what you don't believe?

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*rising*). He's my husband, and I must ask you . . .

PLATONOV. I don't care what he is. I'll speak the truth! Sit down! (*Forces her to sit.*) Why didn't you choose a working man, a sufferer? Why did you take this pigmy sunken in debt and idleness? Why him of all men?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Stop it! Don't shout! Someone's coming! (*Several guests pass by.*)

PLATONOV. The devil with them! Let them hear! (*In a hushed voice.*) Forgive me for my sharpness. . . . You see, I loved you! I loved you above everything else on earth, and that's why you are dear to me now. . . . How I loved this hair, these hands, this face! Why do you use powder, Sofya Egorovna? Chuck it! Oh! If you could only meet another kind of man, you would rise quickly, but here you'll only sink deeper into the mire! Poor girl! If I were less unfortunate than I am, if I had greater strength, I would tear you and me by the roots out of this mud. (*Pause.*) Oh, life! Why don't we live as we might live!

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*rising, and covering her face with her hands*). Leave me! (*The din in the house becomes audible.*) Go away! (*Goes toward the house.*)

PLATONOV (*following her*). Take your hands from your face! So! You're not going away from here? Say, no! We'll be friends, Sofya! You're not going away? We'll have some more talks, won't we? Yes? (*The din in the house becomes increasingly audible, and running footfalls are heard on the stairs.*)

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Yes.

PLATONOV. We shall be friends, my dear. . . . Why should we be enemies? Allow me . . . Another word or two . . . (*Voinitzev comes running from the house, followed by the guests.*)

SCENE XIX.

The SAME, VOINITZEV with GUESTS, afterwards ANNA PETROVNA and TRILETZKY.

VOINITZEV (*running in*). Ah-h . . . The very people we've been looking for! We're going to light the fireworks! (*Shouts.*) Yakov, towards the river, march! (*To Sofya Egorovna.*) Have you thought it over, Sofya?

PLATONOV. She's not going away. She's decided to remain.

VOINITZEV. Yes? In that case, hurrah! Here's my hand, Mikhail Vassilyitch! (*Presses Platonov's hand.*) I've always believed in your eloquence. . . . Let's go and light the fires! (*Goes with his guests into the depth of the garden.*)

PLATONOV (*after a pause*). Yes, such affairs, Sofya Egorovna . . . H'm . . .

VOICE OF VOINITZEV. *Maman*, where are you? Platonov! (*Pause.*)

PLATONOV. I suppose I must go, the deuce take it, and I . . . (*Shouts.*) Sergey Pavlovitch, wait! Don't light without me! (*Runs into the garden.*)

ANNA PETROVNA (*running from the house*). Wait! Sergey, wait! All the guests aren't here yet! Fire the

cannon in the meantime! (*To Sofya.*) Let's go, Sofya. You're looking sad. . . .

VOICE OF PLATONOV. This way, dear lady! We'll sing an old song, without beginning a new!

ANNA PETROVNA. I'm coming, *mon cher!* (*Runs away.*)

VOICE OF PLATONOV. Who's coming into the boat with me? Sofya Egorovna, what about you making a pair with me?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. To go or not to go? (*Thinking.*)

TRILETZKY (*comes in*). Hey, where are you? (*Sings.*) I'm coming, coming! (*Looks fixedly at Sofya Egorovna.*)

SOFYA EGOROVNA. What do you want?

TRILETZKY. Nothing.

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Then be off! I am not in a mood to chat tonight, or to listen. . . .

TRILETZKY. I know, I know. . . . (*Pause.*) I have a terrible desire for some reason to draw a finger across your forehead; what's your forehead made of? A terrible desire . . . by no means to humiliate you, but . . . for continence . . .

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Jester! (*Turns away her face.*) Not a comedian, but a jester, a clown!

TRILETZKY. Yes . . . a jester . . . For my jesting I've received some meals from Anna Petrovna. . . . Yes . . . and pocket money. . . . But as soon as I get tedious, I'll be sent away in disgrace. It's true, isn't it? I'm not the only one of this opinion. You've

said it yourself when you dined with Glagolyev. . . .

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Good . . . I'm glad that you've been informed. . . . Now you know that I know how to differentiate jesters from witty folk! If you were an actor, you'd have been a favourite with the gallery, but the stalls would have hissed you. . . . I hiss you.

TRILETZKY. You're amazingly witty. . . . Excellent! I have the honour to bow to you! (*He bows.*) A pleasant farewell! I'd have chatted with you a while longer, but . . . I quail, I'm overcome! (*Goes into the depth of the garden.*)

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*stamping a foot*). Wretch! . . . A shallow creature!

VOICE OF PLATONOV. Who'll go on the river with me?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Ah . . . What is to be, is to be! (*She shouts.*) I'm coming! (*Runs.*)

SCENE XX.

GLAGOLYEV I and GLAGOLYEV II (*come from the house*).

GLAGOLYEV I. You lie! You lie, you nasty urchin!
GLAGOLYEV II. What stupidity! Why should I lie? You ask her yourself, if you don't believe me! As soon as you left me I did nothing more than whisper a word or two in her ear, embraced her, kissed her. . . . At first she asked three thousand. Well, I bargained with her and she came down to a thousand! Give me a thousand roubles!
GLAGOLYEV I. Kiryl, this matter concerns a woman's honour! Don't soil this honour, it's sacred! Be silent!
GLAGOLYEV II. I swear by my own honour! You don't believe me? I swear by all that's sacred! Give me the thousand! I'll take it to her.
GLAGOLYEV I. It's terrible. . . . You lie! She made a jest with you, a stupid fellow!
GLAGOLYEV II. But I tell you, I embraced her! That's not surprising! All women are like that nowadays. Don't believe in their innocence! I know them! And you actually wanted to marry her! (*Laughs.*)
GLAGOLYEV I. For God's sake, Kiryl! Do you know what slander is?

GLAGOLYEV II. Give me the thousand! I'll hand the money to her in your presence. On this very form I embraced her, kissed her, and bargained with her. . . . I swear! What more do you want? Why, I sent you away from here on purpose, in order to bargain with her! He doesn't believe me that I'm able to overcome women! Just try proposing two thousand to her, and she's yours! I know women, man!

GLAGOLYEV I (*takes wallet from his pocket and flings it on the ground*). There, take it!

GLAGOLYEV II (*picks up the wallet and counts the money*).

VOICE OF VOINITZEV. I'm beginning! Shoot, *maman!* Triletzky, climb up on the summer-house! Who's stepped on the box? You!

VOICE OF TRILETZKY. I'm climbing, the devil take me! (*Laughs.*) Who's this? I've stepped on Bugrov's head! Where are the matches?

GLAGOLYEV II (*aside*). I'm avenged! (*He shouts.*) Hur-rah-h! (*Runs away.*)

TRILETZKY. Who's raising that racket there? Give him one across the neck!

VOICE OF VOINITZEV. Shall we begin?

GLAGOLYEV I (*holding his head*). My God! What corruption! And I prayed to her! Forgive her, oh Lord! (*He sits down on the form and covers his face with his hands.*)

VOICE OF VOINITZEV. Who's taken the cord? *Maman,*

aren't you ashamed? Where's the bit of cord that had been lying here?

VOICE OF ANNA PETROVNA. Here it is, lazybones!

GLAGOLYEV I (*rises, tottering, from the form*).

VOICE OF ANNA PETROVNA. You? Who are you? Don't stamp about here! (*She shouts.*) Bring it here! Here! (*Sofya Egorovna comes running in.*)

SCENE XXI.

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*alone*).

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*pale, with ruffled coiffure*). I can't! It's too much, quite beyond my strength! (*Catches her breast.*) I am lost . . . or it's my happiness! It's stifling here! . . . He'll either ruin me, or . . . he's the bearer of new life! I welcome you, and bless you . . . new life! It's decided!

VOICE OF VOINITZEV (*shouting*). Watch out! (*Fireworks.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II.

Scene:

A wood. The beginning of a vista. To the left, the school. In the vista, stretching into the distance, lies a railway line which turns to the right near the school. A row of telegraph poles. Night.

SCENE I.

SASHA (*sitting at the open window*) and OSSIP (*with a rifle across his back stands outside*).

OSSIP. How did it happen? Very simply. . . . I go walking in a little path in the wood, not far from here, and as I look I see she's standing in a little ravine; she has her skirt tucked up and she's scooping up water with the palm of her hand and drinking it and wetting her forehead with it. . . . I go down close to her and watch her. . . . But she doesn't pay the slightest attention to me. Of course, I can understand that. I'm a fool, a moujik . . . why should she look at me? "Your Excellency," say I to her, "are you having a nice cold drink?" "What business is it of yours?" she asks. "Go where you came from!" She says this and never looks once at me. . . . I was taken aback, I may tell you. I felt ashamed and hurt, because I was a plain moujik. . . . "Why do you keep on looking on me, you fool? Haven't you ever seen people before?" And she looks me through and through. . . . "Or," she says, "do I please you?" "I can't tell you," says I, "how much you please me! Your Excellency, you are such a well-

born, such an understanding person, and such a beauty. . . . I never did see anyone better looking. . . . Our village beauty Manka," say I, "compared to you is a horse, a camel. . . . You are so gentle-like! If I were to kiss you, I think I'd die on the spot!" She laughs at this. . . . "Go ahead, and kiss me, if you like!" says she. Her words threw me into a heat. I went up to her, took her gently by her shoulder and kissed her mightily right here, on her cheek and neck all at once.

SASHA (*laughs*). And what did she do?

OSSIP. "Now," she says, "die on the spot! Go," she says, "and wash yourself a bit oftener, and don't let your nails grow!" And I went away.

SASHA. She's a bold one! (*Hands Ossip a plate of sour-cabbage soup.*) There, eat! Sit down somewhere!

OSSIP. I don't mind standing. . . . I'm awfully grateful to you for your kindness, and one day I shall repay you. . . .

SASHA. Take your hat off! It isn't proper to eat with your hat on. And say grace!

OSSIP (*taking his hat off*). It's long since I've observed the sacred customs. . . . (*He begins to eat.*) From that time, what I've been telling you of, I was as if I had gone out of my wits. . . . Would you believe it? I neither eat nor sleep. . . . She's always before my eyes. . . . I shut my eyes, and she's there before me. . . . I've grown so gentle-like, that I

might as well go and hang myself! I almost drowned myself, I wanted to shoot the general. . . . And when she became a widow, I began to carry out all sorts of errands for her. . . . I shot partridges for her, trapped quails, painted her summer-house for her in many colours. . . . Once I brought her a live wolf. . . . I managed all sorts of pleasures for her. . . . Once she commanded anything, it was done. . . . If she had asked me to do away with myself, I'd have done it. . . . Gentle feelings . . . What's one to do with them?

SASHA. Yes . . . When I fell in love with Mikhail Vassilyevitch I didn't yet know that he was in love with me . . . and I had terrible yearnings. Often, sinner that I am, I even implored God to grant me death. . . . [But imagine, Ossip, my joy, when one day he walks up to me and suddenly says: "Little girl, would you like to be my wife?" Just imagine my joy. . . . From joy I even lost all sense of shame and I flung myself on his neck!]

OSSIP. There, you see . . . where feelings lead to. . . . (*Drinks up what is left in the plate.*) Can you spare any more cabbage soup? (*Hands her the plate.*)

SASHA (*disappears for half a minute and returns to the window with a saucepan*). There's no soup left. What about some potatoes roasted in goose-fat?

OSSIP. *Merci.* . . . (*Takes the saucepan and eats.*) I've had a fine feed! As I was saying, I was going about like out of my wits. . . . Always the same

thing, Alexandra Ivanovna. . . . Always going about like that. . . . Once last year I brought her a hare. . . . "Here, allow me, Your Excellency . . ." say I to her. . . . "I've brought you a squint-eyed beast!" She takes him in her hands, strokes him a bit, then asks: "Is it true, Ossip, that you're a ruffian?" "It's the honest truth," say I, "people don't say things for nothing. . . ." And I told her everything. . . . "It's necessary," says she, "to make a new man of you. Go," says she, "on foot to Kiev. From Kiev go on to Moscow, from Moscow go on to the Trinity Monastery, from the Trinity Monastery go on to New Jerusalem, and from there come home. Go on wandering, and you'll come back in a year a new man." And so I dressed up like a beggar, put a bag on my back, and went to Kiev. . . . Well, I got better, but not quite. . . . These are fine potatoes! In Kharkov I joined up with some respectable company, spent my money in drink, did a bit of wrangling and returned here. . . . I had even lost my passport. . . . (*Pause.*) Now she won't take anything from me. . . . Gets angry too. . . .

SASHA. Why don't you go to church, Ossip?

OSSIP. I'd go, but . . . The people would begin to laugh. . . . Oh, they'll say, he's come to repent! And I have an awful feeling passing the church by day. . . . There're a lot of people about. They'd kill me.

SASHA. Well, why do you hurt poor folk?

OSSIP. Why shouldn't I hurt them? It's not the sort of thing you'd understand, Alexandra Ivanovna! Doesn't Mikhail Vassilyevitch hurt anybody?

SASHA. No one! If he does hurt anybody, it's without wanting to, by mere chance. He's a good man!

OSSIP. I must admit I respect him more than anybody. . . . That mock general, Sergey Pavlitch, is a stupid fellow. Your brother, too, isn't clever, if he is a doctor. But in Mikhail Vassilyevitch there's a clever mind! Has he a rank?

SASHA. To be sure. He's a collegiate registrar!

OSSIP. Well? (*Pause.*) He is a clever lad! So he's got a rank too. H'm, a clever lad! Only there's little goodness in him. . . . He considers everybody a fool, a slave. . . . Is it right of him? If I were a good man, I shouldn't act like that. I should be kind to these fools, slaves and rascals. . . . They're a wretched folk, and it's them one ought to pity. . . . There's little goodness in him. . . . There's no pride in him. He's a hail fellow well met with everyone, but there's not a drop of goodness in him. . . . It's not for you to understand. . . . I humbly thank you! I could go on eating such potatoes forever. . . . (*He returns the saucepan to her.*) Thank you. . . .

SASHA. Don't mention it.

OSSIP (*sighing*). You're a fine woman, Alexandra Ivanovna! Why do you always feed me? Haven't you, if but a single drop, of woman's spite? You're a devout woman! (*He laughs.*) The first time I've

met such a one. . . . Saint Alexandra, pray to God about us sinners! (*He bows to her.*) Rejoice, Saint Alexandra!

SASHA. Mikhail Vassilyitch is coming.

OSSIP. You can't fool me. . . . He's at this moment discussing tender feelings with a young lady. . . . He's a handsome man! If he wanted, he could get the whole female sex to follow him. . . . He's such a fine talker. . . . (*Laughs.*) He's trying to find favour with the general's widow. . . . She'll snub him yet, won't consider his good looks. . . . If he only wanted it, she too . . .

SASHA. You're babbling too much. . . . I don't like it. . . . Go, and God be with you!

OSSIP. I'm going. . . . You should have been in bed long ago. . . . Sitting up for your husband?

SASHA. Yes.

OSSIP. You're a good wife! Platonov must have sought for the likes of you for ten years with candles. . . . Well, he's found one all the same. . . . (*Bows to her.*) Good-bye, Alexandra Ivanovna! Good-night!

SASHA (*yawning*). God be with you!

OSSIP (*going*). I'll go home. . . . My home is there where the floor is the earth, the ceiling the sky, and no one knows where the walls and the roof are. . . . Whom God has cursed, he lives in this house. . . . It is large, yet there's no place for one's head. . . . The only good thing about it is there's no tax to pay.

. . . (*Stops.*) Into the wood . . . Every bird, every lizard knows Ossip! There's a stump, all lighted up! It's as if a dead man had risen up from his grave. . . . There's another! My mother said that there's a sinner under that stump, and the stump's lit up to remind us to pray. . . . And over me there'll be a stump also lit up. . . . I'm also a sinner. . . . And there's a third! There are so many sinners on this earth! (*Walks away, and, after a couple of minutes, whistles.*)

SCENE II.

SASHA.

SASHA (*coming out of the school with a candle and a book*). How late Misha is! (*Sits down.*) I only hope he doesn't injure his health. . . . These outings give nothing but bad health. . . . And I do so want to sleep. . . . Where was I? (*Reads.*) "It is time, at last, once more to proclaim those eternal principles of freedom, which had been the guiding stars of our fathers and which we had betrayed to our own misfortune." What does it mean? (*Thinking.*) I don't understand. . . . Why don't they write so everyone can understand? Let's see further. . . . M'm . . . I'll skip the introduction. . . . (*Reads.*) "Sacher-Mazoch" . . . What an absurd name! Mazoch . . . Most likely a foreigner. . . . Further . . . Misha insists on my reading it, so I'd better read it. . . . (*Yawns and reads.*) "On a cheerful winter evening . . ." I think I'd better skip this. . . . A description . . . (*Turns the leaves and reads.*) "It was hard to decide who played and on what instrument. . . . The powerful sonorous sounds of the organ issuing from an iron masculine hand suddenly changed to sounds of the gentle flute as it were from

a woman's lips and, at last, died away. . . ." Tss . . . Someone's coming. . . . (*Pause.*) Sounds like Misha. . . . (*Extinguishes the candle.*) At last! (*Rises and shouts!*) Ai! One-two! One-two! Left-right! Left-right! Left, left!

(*Enter Platonov.*)

SCENE III.

SASHA and PLATONOV.

PLATONOV (*entering*). Just to spite you: right! right! Actually, my dear, neither right nor left! A drunken man has no right or left. He only knows forward, backward, aslant and below. . . .

SASHA. This way, please, little drunken fellow. Sit down here. And I'll show you how to march aslant and below! Sit down! (*Flings herself on his neck.*)

PLATONOV. I obey. . . . (*He sits down.*) Why aren't you abed, you little beast?

SASHA. I don't feel like it. . . . (*Sits down at his side.*) You're rather late!

PLATONOV. Yes, late. . . . Has the passenger train passed by yet?

SASHA. Not yet. The goods train passed by an hour ago.

PLATONOV. That means, it isn't two yet. When did you get back from there?

SASHA. I was home at ten. . . . When I returned I found Kolka bawling for all he was worth. . . . I left without saying good-bye. I hope they'll forgive me. . . . Was there any dancing after I left?

PLATONOV. There were dances, and supper, and

scandals too. . . . By the way, have you heard? Did it happen while you were there? Old Glagolyev had a stroke!

SASHA. You don't mean it!

PLATONOV. Yes . . . Your brother attended to him. . . .

SASHA. How did it come about? What's the matter with him? Why, he seemed strong to me. . . .

PLATONOV. It was only a light stroke. . . . Light, fortunately for him, and unfortunately for the little donkey whom he stupidly dignifies by the name of son. . . . They took him home. . . . Not a single affair but has its scandal! Such is our unlucky lot!

SASHA. I can imagine how frightened Anna Petrovna and Sofya Egorovna must have been! What a fine woman Sofya Egorovna is! I seldom see such splendid women. . . . What's there about her . . . (*Pause.*)

PLATONOV. Ah! It was stupid, insolent. . . .

SASHA. What?

PLATONOV. I made such a mess of things! (*Covers his face with his hands.*) Simply shameful!

SASHA. What have you done?

PLATONOV. What have I done? Nothing good! Why didn't I foresee the consequences?

SASHA (*aside*). The poor fellow has had a drop too much. (*To him.*) Let's go to bed!

PLATONOV. I was nasty as never before! How can I respect myself now? There's no greater misfortune

than to be deprived of one's self-respect! My God! There's nothing in me that one might grasp, nothing in me that one might respect and love! (*Pause.*) Yet you love me. . . . I don't understand it! That means, you've found something in me that can be loved. You do love me?

SASHA. What a question! Is it possible for me not to love you?

PLATONOV. I know. But please name that good in me, for which you love me! What is it you do love in me?

SASHA. H'm . . . Why do I love you? What a strange man you are tonight, Misha! How am I not to love you if you're my husband?

PLATONOV. So you love me only because I'm your husband?

SASHA. I don't understand you.

PLATONOV. You don't understand me? (*Laughs.*) You little silly! Why aren't you a fly? Among flies you with your mind would be the very cleverest fly! (*Kisses her forehead.*) What would happen to you if you understood me, if you didn't have your knack of not seeing things? Would you be happy in your woman's way, if you could get into your innocent head the fact that there's nothing in me that can be loved? Don't understand, my treasure, don't see, if you want to go on loving me! (*Kisses her hand.*) My little female! I am happy by the grace of your being unable to see! Like other people, I have a family . . . a family. . . .

SASHA (*laughing*). You strange man!

PLATONOV. My treasure! Little, silly girl! It's not a wife you ought to be . . . but you ought to be shown under glass! How did you manage to bring little Nikolka into the world? It's not Nikolkas you ought to bear . . . but you ought to make toy soldiers out of dough, my dear better half!

SASHA. What nonsense you do say, Misha!

PLATONOV. May heaven preserve you from any understanding! Don't understand! Then the earth will rest on whales, and the whales on pitchforks! Where could we get permanent wives, if you were not here on earth, Sasha? (*Tries to kiss her.*)

SASHA (*resisting*). Get out! (*Angrily.*) Why, then, did you marry me if I'm as stupid as all that? You might have married a clever one! I didn't force you to marry me!

PLATONOV (*laughing*). So you can actually be angry! Ah, the deuce take it! That's quite a revelation! A revelation, indeed! So you can be angry! You're not joking, are you?

SASHA (*rising*). Go, man, and have your sleep! If you hadn't a drop too much, you wouldn't have made any discoveries! A drunkard! A teacher, to boot! You're not a teacher, but the devil knows what! Go, and have your sleep! (*Slaps him on the shoulder and goes into the school.*)

SCENE IV.

PLATONOV (*alone*).

PLATONOV. Really, am I drunk? Impossible. . . . I drank so little I don't feel quite myself. . . . (*Pause.*) And when I spoke with Sofya, was I . . . drunk? (*Thinking.*) No, I wasn't! I wish to God I had been! But I wasn't! My accursed soberness! (*He jumps up.*) In what had her unhappy husband sinned against me? Why did I soil his honour before her? My conscience will never forgive me for this. I chattered on before her like a small urchin, showed off, play-acted, boasted. . . . (*Mocks himself.*) "Why didn't you marry a workingman, a sufferer?" Why should she marry a workingman, a sufferer? You fool, why did you say something which you did not believe? Ah! She believed you. . . . She listened to the ravings of a fool and lowered her eyes! She, unhappy woman, grew soft, so tender. . . . How stupid it all is, how insolent, uncouth! [Why did I kiss her hands? I shall have to pay dearly for this pleasure. And she gave me her cheek to kiss! Aaah . . . I must leave this place. . . . Everything's finished for me!] I'm sick of everything. . . . [The widow proved a woman, Sofya a

silly girl, I . . . And Grekova?] (*Laughs.*) I'm stupid! It's really absurd! He doesn't take bribes, he doesn't thieve, he doesn't beat his wife, and he can think better than most, yet . . . a worthless fellow, for all that! A laughable wretch! An extraordinary wretch! (*Pause.*) It's necessary to leave . . . I'm going to ask the inspector to give me another place. This very day I shall write to town.

(*Enter Vengerovitch II.*)

SCENE V.

PLATONOV and VENGEROVITCH II.

VENGEROVITCH II (*entering*). H'm . . . So here's the school in which eternally sleeps the unfinished sage. . . . Is he sleeping now according to habit, or is he cursing himself according to habit? (*Seeing Platonov.*) Here he is, empty and hollow-sounding. . . . He is neither sleeping nor cursing himself. . . . He doesn't feel quite normal. . . . (*To Platonov.*) Aren't you yet abed?

PLATONOV. As you see! Why are you stopping here? Allow me to wish you a good-night!

VENGEROVITCH II. I'm going presently. Do you give yourself up to solitude? (*Glances round.*) Do you feel yourself a Tsar of nature? In such a lovely night. . . .

PLATONOV. Are you going home?

VENGEROVITCH II. Yes . . . My father left earlier, and I am forced to go home on foot. Are you enjoying yourself? So pleasant, isn't it? To drink champagne and get into a mood to observe yourself! [When I get drunk, I fly in the skies and build myself towers of Babel!] May I sit near you?

PLATONOV. You may.

VENGEROVITCH II. Thank you. (*Sits down.*) I like to give thanks for everything. How pleasant to sit here, on these steps, and feel oneself a full master! Where's your helpmeet? To all this hum, to all this murmuring of nature, singing and chirping of crickets, all that it is necessary to add to turn it into paradise is the lisp of one's beloved! This timid, coquettish breeze wants only the hot breathing of one's dear one to make the cheeks flame with happiness! The murmur of Mother Earth only needs words of love! Woman! You look astonished. . . . Ha! Ha! Doesn't it sound like me? That's true, it doesn't. . . . If I were sober, I should feel ashamed of my words. . . . Anyhow, why shouldn't I babble on in a poetic fashion? H'm . . . Who's going to forbid me?

PLATONOV. No one.

VENGEROVITCH II. Or, perhaps, such god-like speech doesn't become my condition, my figure? I haven't a poetic face, have I?

PLATONOV. No, you haven't.

VENGEROVITCH II. H'm . . . I'm very glad. No Jew has a poetic countenance. . . . Nature's played a joke on us Jews, hasn't given us poetic countenances. We generally judge men by their physiognomies, and because we have a certain kind of physiognomy we are denied the possession of any poetical feeling. . . . They say that we Jews have no poets. . . .

PLATONOV. Who says so?

VENGEROVITCH II. Everyone says so. . . . It's a filthy calumny!

PLATONOV. Enough quibbling! Who says so?

VENGEROVITCH II. Everyone says so. Actually, we have so many real poets . . . not Pushkins or Lermontovs . . . but Auerbach, Heine, Goethe . . .

PLATONOV. Goethe is a German.

VENGEROVITCH II. He's a Jew!

PLATONOV. A German!

VENGEROVITCH II. A Jew! I know what I'm talking about!

PLATONOV. I too know what I'm talking about. But let it be as you say! There's no out-arguing a half-educated Jew.

VENGEROVITCH II. No, there isn't. . . . (*Pause.*) Even if we haven't any poets! It's not of much consequence! If there are poets . . . good! If there are no poets . . . still better! The poet, as a man of feeling, is usually a parasite, an egoist. Has Goethe, as a poet, given a single German proletarian a crumb of bread?

PLATONOV. Enough, young man! Neither did he take any bread from the German proletariat! That's important. . . . It's better to be a poet than nobody! A million times better! In any case, we'd best stop talking. . . . Leave in peace the crumb of bread about which you haven't the least understanding, and the poets whom your dried-up soul doesn't comprehend, and me whom you are bent on tormenting!

VENGEROVITCH II. I shan't disturb your valiant heart! I shan't pull the warm blanket off from you. . . . Go on sleeping! (*Pause.*) Look at the sky! . . . It is good and calm here, there are only trees here. . . . There is none of these satiated, self-satisfied faces here. . . . Yes . . . The trees do not murmur for me. . . . And the moon does not so graciously look on me as it does on Platonov. . . . She's trying to look coolly at me. . . . You're not one of us, it seems to say. . . . Go away from here, from this paradise, to your little Jew shop. . . . It's all nonsense, of course! . . . I've babbled enough!

PLATONOV. Yes, enough. . . . Go home, young man! The longer you sit here the more you'll babble. . . . And you'll live to blush for it, as you've said before. Go!

VENGEROVITCH II. I feel like babbling! (*Laughs.*) I'm a poet now!

PLATONOV. Not a poet is he who is ashamed of his youth. You're now experiencing youth, be youthful then! It's laughable and stupid, perhaps, but at least it's human!

VENGEROVITCH II. So . . . What stupidities! You're a strange man, Platonov! All are strange here. . . . You should have lived at the time of Noah. . . . And the general's widow is strange, and Voinitzev is strange. . . . Anyhow, the widow is not at all bad in the physical sense. . . . What intelligent eyes she has! What beautiful fingers! Really handsome,

isn't she? What breasts, what a neck! . . . (*Pause.*) Why, I ask you . . . am I really so much worse than you? If but once in life it should happen to me! If mere thoughts act so potently on my whole being, what bliss it would be for me if she suddenly showed herself among those trees and lured me to her with her transparent fingers! . . . Don't look at me so! I am stupid now, an urchin. . . . Anyhow, who will dare to forbid my being stupid if but once in life? I should like to be stupid now, and happy as you are, with a scientific object. . . . And I am happy. . . . Whose business is it? H'm . . .

PLATONOV. But . . . (*Surveys Vengerovitch's watch-chain.*)

VENGEROVITCH II. In any case, personal happiness is egoism!

PLATONOV. Oh, yes! Personal happiness is egoism, but personal unhappiness is a virtue! You're certainly capable of a lot of gibberish! What a chain! What a marvellous trinket! How it glitters!

VENGEROVITCH II. You're interested in my chain? (*Laughs.*) Does this tinsel . . . its glitter . . . attract you? (*Shakes his head.*) In these moments, when you're instructing me in poetics, you can go into raptures over gold! Take this chain! (*He tears off his chain and flings it to one side.*)

PLATONOV. Whew, what a jingle! One may conclude from the sound that it's quite a heavy chain.

VENGEROVITCH II. Gold is heavy not in weight alone!

How happy you must be to be able to sit on these filthy steps! You don't experience here the full weight of this filthy gold! Oh, these golden links are my golden fetters!

PLATONOV. In any case, not always lasting fetters! Our fathers had squandered them in drink!

VENGEROVITCH II. How many unfortunates, how many hungry people, and how many drunkards there are under the moon! When shall those many millions who sow much but eat little cease to hunger? When, I ask you. Platonov, why don't you answer?

PLATONOV. [And when, dear sir, will you, with your father, cease to erect dram-shops? And when shall I cease being an eager visitor in your dram-shops? When shall the Vengerovitches perish from the earth, and the Platonovs cease eating the bread of others? When? Be silent, then, my dear fellow! Or . . .] Leave me in peace! Do me the kindness! I don't like the incessant senseless din of ringing bells! Forgive me, but leave me in peace! I want to go to bed!

VENGEROVITCH II. So I'm a bell? H'm . . . You're a bell, if we are to speak the truth. . . .

PLATONOV. I'm a bell, and you're a bell, with the only difference that I ring myself, and you are rung by others. . . . Good-night! (*Rises.*)

VENGEROVITCH II. Good-night! (*The school clock strikes two.*) It's already two o'clock! I should sleep now, and I can't! Insomnia, champagne, perturba-

tion. . . . It's an abnormal life, and it destroys the human organism. . . . (*Rises.*) I think I'm beginning to have a pain in my chest. . . . Good-night! I don't intend to give you my hand, and I'm proud of this. You have no right to the pressure of my hand. . . .

PLATONOV. What nonsense! It's all the same to me. . . .

VENGEROVITCH II. I hope no one has heard our chatter. (*Goes into the depth of the scene and presently is seen walking back.*)

PLATONOV. Poor man! How many contradictions, how much unnecessary rubbish and unbearable pedantry in his poor, little body! Ah! I wish I had my youth back again! I would show them. . . . But he sits there and groans! He has nothing to do! He must proclaim to the world that personal happiness is egoism! That's all he needs to do! What unpardonable poverty! His own tongue, but the words of others . . . I don't seem to be able to go beyond the words and minds of others. . . .

VENGEROVITCH II (*returns*).

PLATONOV. What do you want?

VENGEROVITCH II. I left my chain here. . . .

PLATONOV. Here's your chain! (*He kicks the chain with his foot.*) All the same, you hadn't forgotten it! Listen! Be so good as to sacrifice your chain for the benefit of an acquaintance of mine who belongs to those who sow much and eat little! This chain

would feed him and his family for years! Let me give it to him. . . .

VENGEROVITCH II. No. . . . I would give it to you with pleasure, but upon my word, I can't! It's a gift. . . .

PLATONOV. Yes, yes . . . Get out!

VENGEROVITCH II (*picking up the chain*). Don't say that to me! (*Goes into the depth of the scene, and wearily sits down on the railway bed and covers his face with his hands.*)

PLATONOV. What triviality! To be young, and yet not be radiant! What profound corruption! (*Sits down.*) How hateful are men in whom we see if but a hint of our unclean past! I once somewhat resembled him. . . . Oh! [Oh, youth! Oh, youth! On the one side, a healthy body, a live brain, an unutterable honesty, courage, love for freedom, light and greatness. . . . On the other . . . a scorn of labour, desperate phrase-making, ribaldry, corruption, lying. . . . On the one side, Shakespeare and Goethe; on the other . . . money, a career and impudence! And science and the arts? (*Laughs.*) Poor orphans! There are neither the called nor the chosen among them! It's time to put them into a museum, or shut them up in an asylum for illegitimate children. . . . (*Laughs.*) Hundred millions of people with heads, with brains, and only two or three scholars, one and a half artists, and not one writer! Have a jolly time, good people! Science and art . . .

that's labour, it is the triumph of the idea over muscles, it is the evangelic life . . . but what's the good of life to us? Even we who have not lived shall be able to die! (*Pause.*) It's terrible!] (*A horse's hoofs can be heard.*)

SCENE VI.

PLATONOV and ANNA PETROVNA (*who enters in riding-habit, and whip in her hand*).

PLATONOV. Anna Petrovna!

ANNA PETROVNA. How am I to get at him? Should I knock? (*Seeing Platonov.*) You here? How does that happen? I knew that you weren't yet asleep. . . . How can one sleep now? God had created winter for sleep. . . . Good-evening, man! (*Gives him her hand.*) Well? What's up? Your hand, please!

PLATONOV (*stretches forward his hand*).

ANNA PETROVNA. You're not drunk?

PLATONOV. The devil knows! I'm either sober, or drunk, like the most hopeless drunkard. . . . And what are you up to? Are you taking an airing, most esteemed somnambulist?

ANNA PETROVNA (*sitting down beside him*). N . . . yes-s . . . Yes, dearest Mikhail Vassilyitch! (*Sings.*) How much gladness, how much sorrow . . . (*Laughs.*) What large, astonished eyes! Don't be afraid, my friend!

PLATONOV. I'm not afraid . . . not for myself, at all events. . . . (*Pause.*) I see you've taken to nonsense.

ANNA PETROVNA. Blame it on old age. . . .

PLATONOV. Old women may be forgiven. . . . But you are no old woman! You are young, as the summer in June. Your life's before you.

ANNA PETROVNA. I must have life now, and not the life before me. And I am young, Platonov, terribly young! I feel it. . . . Devilishly young, I tell you. . . . (*Pause.*)

PLATONOV. [What do you want from me?] (*Jumps up.*) [What do you want from me?] I don't want to understand, or guess, or surmise. . . . I don't want anything! Go! Call me a boor, only leave me in peace! I implore you! H'm . . . Why do you look at me like that? You . . . you'd better think it over. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. I've already done so.

PLATONOV. Just think it over, you proud, intelligent, lovely woman! Where and why you've come here! Ah . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. I've come with all speed! I've come on horse-back, my dear! (*Laughs.*)

PLATONOV. With such a mind, with such beauty, youth . . . to me? Neither my eyes nor my ears can believe it. . . . So you've come to conquer, to take possession of the fortress! But I'm not a fortress! You couldn't have come to conquer. . . . I am weakness itself, terrible weakness! Understand me!

ANNA PETROVNA (*rises and comes near him*). Self-abasement comes after pride. . . . What is it to be,

Misha dear? There must be some end to this. You yourself must see that. . . .

PLATONOV. I can't end something which I didn't begin!

ANNA PETROVNA. You with your loathsome philosophy! Aren't you ashamed to lie? In such a night, and under such a sky . . . to tell lies! Lie, if you must, in the Autumn, when the mud is thick, but not now, not here. . . . You are being overheard, you are being overseen. . . . Look up, strange man, at the sky! (*Pause.*) The stars blink at your lies! Enough, my dear! Now be good, as all this is good. Don't destroy the mood of this marvellous silence. . . . Defeat your devils! (*Embraces him with one arm.*) There's no one else whom I might love as I love you! There's no woman whom you might love as you love me. . . . Just take love alone, and let the rest go! (*Kisses him.*) Take love alone. . . .

PLATONOV. Odysseus was worthy of being sung to by the Sirens, but I'm not Odysseus, oh, Siren! (*Embraces her.*) If I could only give you happiness! How lovely you are! But I'll not give you happiness! I'll give you what I've given to all women who have flung themselves on my neck. . . . I'll give you misery!

ANNA PETROVNA. You think too much of yourself! Are you, really, as terrible as all that, Don Juan? (*Laughs.*) How nice you are in the moonlight! Quite handsome!

PLATONOV. I know myself! Only those romances end well in which I don't appear. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. Let's sit here. (*They sit down on the railway bed.*) What else have you to say, philosopher?

PLATONOV. If I were an honest man, I would run away from you. . . . I had a presentiment of this tonight. . . . Wretch that I am, why didn't I run away?

ANNA PETROVNA. Defeat your devils, Misha! Don't let them poison you. . . . A woman has come to you, not a wild beast. . . . What a face you make! Fie! If you're not pleased, I'll go away. . . . Do you want me to? (*Laughs.*) You silly! Take, seize, grasp. . . . What more do you want? Act as if you were smoking a cigarette. Smoke to the end, then take the stub and cast it aside. . . . Be a man! (*Teasingly.*) How absurd you are!

PLATONOV. [Don't I know why your eyes sparkle? You want happiness, the triumph of youth, passion, fire. . . . The courageous and honest words of love.] . . . Are you really mine? Were you created for me? (*Kisses her hands.*) Go to another, my dear. . . . Go to him who is worthy of you. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. Oh! You've talked enough nonsense! Why, it's very simple: a woman has come to you . . . she loves you, and you love her. . . . The weather is lovely. . . . What could be more simple?

Where does philosophy come in? Or politics? Or do you want to show off?

PLATONOV. H'm . . . (*Rising.*) But suppose you came to sport with me, play the wanton? Then what? I'll not let you play with me! I'll not enter into any petty intrigue. . . . (*Seizes his head in his hands.*) To respect and love you, and at the same time . . . that's pettiness, vulgarity, a plebeian game!

ANNA PETROVNA (*coming close to him*). You love and respect me. Why, then, tormented soul, do you bargain with me, and say such insolent things to me? Where does "suppose" come in here? I love you. . . . I've told you, and you know yourself, that I love you. . . . What more do you want? I want peace. . . . (*She puts her head on his breast.*) Peace. . . . Please, once and for all, understand me! I want to rest . . . to forget and nothing more. . . . You don't know. . . . You don't know how hard my life is, and I . . . want to live!

PLATONOV. I shan't be able to give you peace!

ANNA PETROVNA. If you only weren't able to philosophize! . . . Live! Everything lives, moves. . . . There is life all around us. . . . Let us also live! Tomorrow we'll solve problems, but today, in this night, let us live, live. . . . Live, Misha! (*Pause.*)

PLATONOV (*seizing her hand*). Listen! . . . For the last time . . . I speak as an honest man. . . . Go away! For the last time! Go away!

ANNA PETROVNA (*laughing*). Are you joking? Don't

be silly, man! I'll not leave you now! (*Flings herself on his neck.*) Do you hear? For the last time I tell you: I'll not let you go? No matter what happens! You may ruin me, you may perish yourself; I stay here! To live! Tra-ta-ta-ta . . . ra-ra-ra . . . Why do you try to get away, you strange man? You are mine! Now fire away with your philosophy!

PLATONOV. Once more . . . As an honest man . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. I have not taken with honour, I will take by force. . . . Love me if you love me . . . and don't make yourself out to be a fool! Tra-ta-ta-ta . . . Ring, bells of triumph! Come to me, come to me! (*Flings a black kerchief over his head.*) Come to me!

PLATONOV. To you? (*Laughs.*) You silly woman! You don't know your own good. . . . You'll end up by crying! I shan't be your husband, because you were not made for me, and I shan't allow you to play with me. . . . We'll see who'll do the playing with the other. . . . We'll see. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA (*laughing*). *Allons!* (*Takes his arm.*) Wait. . . . Someone's coming. Let's get behind the tree. . . . (*They hide behind a tree.*) It's someone in a frock-coat, not a peasant. . . . Why don't you write leaders for the newspapers? You ought to write well. . . . [If you like, I'll give you a letter to an editor, whom I happen to know. . . . I'm not joking. . . .]

(*Enter Triletzky.*)

SCENE VII.

The SAME and TRILETZKY.

TRILETZKY (*knocking on a schoolhouse window*). Sasha! Little sister! Sasha!

SASHA (*opening the window*). Who's there? It's you, Kolya! What do you want?

TRILETZKY. Aren't you yet asleep? Let me in, darling, for a night's shelter!

SASHA. Of course!

TRILETZKY. You can put me in the class-room. . . . And please don't tell Misha I'm here . . . he'll keep me up with his philosophy! My head goes round. I'm seeing double. . . . I'm seeing two windows. Through which one shall I get in? It's well I'm not married, or I'd imagine I was a bigamist. . . . And you have two heads on your two necks! That reminds me: near the tree stump, by the river . . . that is, I sneezed there, and when I drew out my handkerchief I dropped forty roubles. . . . Do get there early tomorrow, and pick them up. . . . Have a good look round. . . . You may keep them. . . .

SASHA. Most likely the carpenters will pick up the money at dawn. . . . What a clown you are, Kolya!

Oh, yes! I'd almost forgotten . . . The shopkeeper's wife was here and begged you to come and see her husband as soon as ever you can. . . . He was suddenly taken ill. . . . Had a stroke or something. . . . Go quickly!

TRILETZKY. God be with him! How can I . . . I myself have pains in the head and in the stomach . . . (*Climbs through the window.*) Stand to one side. . . .

SASHA. Come, be quick! You've caught me with your foot. . . . (*Shuts the window.*)

PLATONOV. The devils are sending someone else here!

ANNA PETROVNA. Don't move.

PLATONOV. Don't hold on to me. . . . I'll do what I like! Who's coming?

ANNA PETROVNA. Petrin and Stcherbook. (*Enter Petrin and Stcherbook reeling, without their frock-coats. The first is wearing a black top-hat, the other a grey.*)

SCENE VIII.

VENGEROVITCH II (*in the depth of the scene*), PLATONOV, ANNA PETROVNA, PETRIN and STCHERBOOK.

PETRIN. Hurrah! Hurrah! Where's the road? Where have we come to? What's this? (*Laughs.*) Here, dear Paul, is the place of national education! Here they teach fools to forget God and cheat folk! That's where we've got to. . . . H'm . . . So . . . Here, brother, is he who . . . how's he called? Oh, yes, Plat-tonov. . . . Platty . . . a civilized man. . . . Paul, where's Platty now? Tell me, don't be ashamed! D'you think he's singing a duet with the general's widow? Oh, God, it's your will. . . . (*Shouts.*) Glagolyev's a fool! She snubbed him, and he had a stroke!

STCHERBOOK. I want to go home, Gerasya. . . . I feel terribly sleepy. . . .

PETRIN. Where are our frock-coats, Paul? We're going to the station-master's for the night, and we haven't our coats. . . . (*Laughs.*) The girls have taken them, eh? Oh, you cavalier, cavalier! (*Sighs.*) Ah, Paul . . . did you drink champagne? Anyhow, you're drunk. . . . D'you know whose champagne you drank? Mine! What you drank was mine, and

what you ate was mine. . . . The widow's frock is mine, and her Sergey's socks are mine . . . all's mine! They got it all from me! And the heels on my own boots are all askew. . . . I gave them everything, and what have I received in return? They thumbed their noses at me, that's all! Yes . . .

PLATONOV. I'm sick of this!

ANNA PETROVNA. Don't . . . They'll leave in a minute! What a beast, this Petrin! How he lies! And the old rag with him believes . . .

PETRIN. The Jew gets more respect . . . The Jew's at the head, while we're at the feet . . . Why? Because the Jew hands out more money . . . From now on, not another penny! I'll protest my note! Tomorrow! I'll shove her ungrateful head into the mud!

[PLATONOV (*walking up to them*). Get out!

PETRIN. What?

PLATONOV. Get out!

PETRIN. Why be angry? It's not necessary to be angry! Where's the road here? There it is! Good-bye, Mr. Platonov! Did you hear me abuse her?

PLATONOV. Yes, I heard you.

PETRIN. Don't say a word to her! I've only joked. . . . I said to Paul . . .

PLATONOV. Good . . . Only get out! I say, Gerasim Kuzmitch . . . If I see you again at the Voinitzevs, or if I hear say but a single word about the sixteen

thousand, you old scoundrel, then . . . I'll throw you out of the window!]

[PETRIN. I understand, young man! . . . Take me, Paul, by the arm! You're my one friend. . . . (*They go.*)]

SCENE IX.

The SAME, without PETRIN and STCHERBOOK.

ANNA PETROVNA (*coming out from behind the trees*). Are they gone?

PLATONOV. Yes. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA (*taking him by the shoulders*). Shall we move on?

PLATONOV. Yes, let's go! I'm going, but if you only knew how little I want to do it! It's not I who's coming to you, but the devil, who's beating me across the nape of the neck, and saying: Go! Go!

[ANNA PETROVNA. What insolence! . . . (*Hits Platonov with her whip.*) Speak, speak! But don't say too much! (*Goes away from Platonov.*) If you want to come, come; if you don't want to, why, don't! I'll not beg. . . . It's too much to expect!

PLATONOV. But . . . It's too late to feel hurt! (*Follows her and takes her arm.*)

ANNA PETROVNA (*tears herself away from him*).

PLATONOV. It's all the same to me. . . . I'm coming. . . . Now you can't stop the devil in me. . . . You turn away? It's too late to feel hurt! We are now left in a situation where no matter how much we may injure each other's dignity we can't part.

. . . We are weak! Don't feel hurt, woman! (*Embraces her.*) I had no idea of hurting you! I only wanted to express myself more clearly. . . . I shall kill myself the moment I allow myself to hurt your feelings. . . . You're everything to me! Even in sin, you are great in my eyes!] Understand me! If my conscience does not accept your love, it's only because of a deep conviction that you are committing an irretrievable mistake. . . .

SASHA (*from the window*). Misha, Misha! Where are you?

PLATONOV. The deuce take it!

SASHA. Ah . . . I see you. . . . Who's with you? (*Laughs.*) Anna Petrovna! Good-evening!

ANNA PETROVNA. Good-evening, Alexandra Ivanovna!

SASHA. So you're in a riding-habit? You've been riding? A fine thing! It's a lovely night! Misha and I will join you!

ANNA PETROVNA. I've had enough, Alexandra Ivanovna. . . . I'm off for home now. . . .

SASHA. In that case, of course . . . Misha, come into the house! I really don't know what to do! Kolya feels badly. . . .

PLATONOV. Which Kolya?

SASHA. Your brother Nikolai. . . . He must have had a drop too much. . . . Come in, please! You too come in, Anna Petrovna! I'll run down into the

cellar and get some cream. . . . We'll each have a glass. . . . Cool cream!

ANNA PETROVNA. Thank you. . . . I must go home. . . . (*To Platonov.*) Go now. . . . I'll wait for you. . . .

SASHA. Come, Misha! (*Disappears from view.*)

PLATONOV. I'd quite forgotten about her existence. . . . Go. . . . I'll get her to bed and come. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. Don't delay. . . .

PLATONOV. We've almost run into a scandal! Goodbye for the moment. . . . (*Goes into the schoolhouse.*)

SCENE X.

ANNA PETROVNA, VENGEROVITCH II, and later OSSIP.

ANNA PETROVNA. A surprise. . . . I too completely forgot her existence. . . . (*Pause.*) It's hard. . . . Anyhow, it's not the first time he deceived this poor little girl! Eh-h . . . to sin! God alone knows about it! Not the first time! . . . knavery! Now wait till he gets her to bed! A whole hour will pass, if not longer. . . .

VENGEROVITCH II (*approaching her*). Anna Petrovna. . . . (*Falls on his knees before her.*) Anna Petrovna! (*Seizes her hand.*) Anna!

ANNA PETROVNA. Who's this? Who are you? (*Bends down to see.*) Who are you? You, Isaac Abramitch? You? What's the matter with you?

VENGEROVITCH II. Anna! (*Kisses her hand.*)

ANNA PETROVNA. Go away! It isn't right! You're a man!

VENGEROVITCH II. Anna!

ANNA PETROVNA. You've held my hand long enough! Get out! (*She pushes his shoulder.*)

VENGEROVITCH II (*falling to the ground*). Oh, how stupid! How stupid!

OSSIP (*appearing*). Comedians! Is it you, Your Ex-

cellency? (*Bows to her.*) How did you come to fall into our sacred places?

ANNA PETROVNA. Is it you, Ossip? Have you been watching? Spying? (*Takes hold of his chin.*) Have you seen everything?

OSSIP. Everything.

ANNA PETROVNA. Why are you so pale? Eh? (*Laughs.*) Are you in love with me, Ossip?

OSSIP. As you please. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. In love with me?

OSSIP. I don't understand you. . . . (*Crying.*) I respected you as a saint. . . . If you had ordered me to go through fire, I should have gone through fire. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. Why, then, didn't you go to Kiev?

OSSIP. What's Kiev to me? I respected you as a saint. . . . There were no people for me holier than you. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. Enough, fool. . . . Bring me some more of your little hares. . . . I'll accept them. . . . Well, good-bye. . . . Come tomorrow to me, and I'll give you some money: it'll pay for a rail journey to Kiev. . . . Good-bye. . . . Don't you dare to touch Platonov! Do you hear?

OSSIP. From now on I don't take any orders from you. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. Tell me, please! Are you going to order me to a convent? His business! . . . Well, well! . . . He's crying. Are you only a little boy?

Enough! . . . When he comes to me, please shoot! . . .

OSSIP. At him?

ANNA PETROVNA. No, into the air. . . . Good-bye, Ossip! Shoot as loudly as you can! Will you shoot?

OSSIP. I'll shoot.

ANNA PETROVNA. That's a smart boy. . . .

OSSIP. Only he'll not come to you. . . . He's now with his wife.

ANNA PETROVNA. Go on arguing. . . . Good-bye, murderer! (*Runs away.*)

SCENE XI.

OSSIP and VENGEROVITCH II.

OSSIP (*beating the ground with his hat and crying*). All's ended! All's ended, and may the earth swallow it all!

VENGEROVITCH II (*lying on the ground*). What's he saying?

OSSIP. I saw all, and heard all! My eyes were bursting, and a mighty hammer kept hammering at my ears! I heard all! Well, how am I not to kill him, when everything in me wants to tear him to pieces. . . . (*Sits down on a mound, his back to the school.*) I must kill him. . . .

VENGEROVITCH II. What's he saying? Kill whom?

SCENE XII.

The SAME, PLATONOV and TRILETZKY.

PLATONOV (*pushing Triletzky out of the schoolhouse*). Get out! Go this instant to the sick shopkeeper! March!

TRILETZKY (*stretching*). Much better if you had waited to drive me out with a stick tomorrow than wake me out of my sleep tonight!

PLATONOV. You're a wretch, Nikolai, a wretch! D'you understand?

TRILETZKY. What's one to do if God made me one?

PLATONOV. Suppose the shopkeeper's already died!

TRILETZKY. If he's died, then the Kingdom of Heaven to him. . . . But if he's still alive, then you speak these terrible words in vain. . . . I'm not going to the shopkeeper! I want to sleep!

PLATONOV. You'll go, you beast! You'll go! (*Pushes him.*) I shan't let you sleep! What do you think you are? What are you making of yourself! Why aren't you doing anything? You are wasting your best days. . . .

TRILETZKY. Stop worrying me. . . . What right, brother, have you . . .

PLATONOV. What sort of creature are you, will you

tell me? For what do you live? Why don't you continue with your science? Eh, beast?

TRILETZKY. We'll discuss this interesting subject when I feel less sleepy. . . . Now let me go and sleep. . . . (*Scratches his head.*) The devil know what! Neither here, nor there, but wake up, you wretch! H'm . . . Honest rules . . . May the devil swallow them, these honest rules!

PLATONOV. What God do you serve, you strange object? What kind of a man are you? Where shall we end?

TRILETZKY. Listen, Mikhail Vassilyitch, who gave you the right to stick your cold paws into others' hearts? Your lack of ceremony is amazing!

PLATONOV. We shall come to nothing! We are a lost people! We're not worth a farthing! (*Weeps.*) There's not a soul who might rest one's eyes! How drab everything is, how filthy, how threadbare. . . . Get out, Nikolai! Go away!

TRILETZKY (*shrugging*). He's crying! (*Pause.*) Very well, I'll go and see the shopkeeper! D'you hear? I'm going!

PLATONOV. As you like!

TRILETZKY. Yes, I'm going! As you see, I'm going. . . .

PLATONOV (*stamping his feet*). Get out!

TRILETZKY. Very well. . . . You'd better go to bed, Misha! It isn't worth being cut up about it! Goodbye! (*Goes, then pauses.*) One word before I go.

. . . Counsel all preachers, including yourself, to practise what they preach. . . . Another thing. . . . One shouldn't waste words on you. . . . One ought to give you a good drubbing; make mincemeat of you. . . . And I ought to break with you forever on account of the little girl. . . . I ought to tell you something which you haven't heard before! But . . . I can't! I'm a poor sort of duellist! That's your luck! . . . (*Pause.*) Good-bye! (*Walks away.*)

SCENE XIII.

PLATONOV, VENGEROVITCH II and OSSIP.

PLATONOV (*seizing his head*). Not I alone am like that! Everyone is! Everyone! My God, what's humankind coming to? [Where's their strength, their reason?] What can I be thinking of! [The soul weeps, while some accursed force, some kind of demon goads one on. . . .] Don't go to her! She's not yours! You'll spoil her life, you'll injure her forever! Leave this place! No! I shall go to her, I shall go on living here, I shall go on drinking and scandal-mongering. . . . They're all vicious here, all stupid, all drunk. . . . Eternally drunk! A stupid mother . . . a drunken father! Father . . . mother! Father . . . May your bones have no peace because you've made me what I am! (*Pause.*) No . . . what did I say? God will forgive me. . . . The Kingdom of Heaven. . . . (*Stumbling on Vengerovitch who's lying on the ground.*) Who's this?

VENGEROVITCH II (*rising to his knees*). A wild, monstrous, infamous night. . . .

PLATONOV. Ah-a-a-a . . . Go and note this wild night in your fool's diary with inks of paternal conscience! Get out from here!

VENGEROVITCH II. Yes . . . I'll note it down! (*Goes.*)

PLATONOV. What was he doing here? Was he listening? (*To Ossip.*) And who are you? What are you doing here? Were you also listening? Get out! Stop. . . . Go after Vengerovitch and take his chain from him!

OSSIP. What chain?

PLATONOV. He has a large golden chain hanging on his breast! Catch up with him and take it from him! Step lively! (*Stamping his feet.*) Lively . . . or you won't catch up with him! He's running to the village like one mad!

OSSIP. And are you going to the widow?

PLATONOV. Run, you wretch! Don't beat him up, but only take his chain! Go on! Why are you standing there? Run!

OSSIP (*runs*).

PLATONOV (*after a pause*). To go . . . To go, or not to go? (*Sighs.*) To go . . . I'll go, and begin a long, banal, ugly song. . . . I thought I was clad in sound armour! In reality . . . A woman has said a word and raised a storm in me. . . . Men try to settle world questions, but I have a woman! All one's life . . . a woman! Cæsar had his Rubicon, but I have a woman. . . . An empty-headed woman-chaser! It wouldn't be pitiful if I didn't try to struggle against it, but I do struggle! I am weak, hopelessly weak!

SASHA (*from the window*). Misha, are you there?

PLATONOV. Yes, I am here, my poor golden one!

SASHA. Come in!

PLATONOV. No, Sasha! I want the air. My head aches horribly. Sleep, my angel!

SASHA. Good-night! (*Shuts the window.*)

PLATONOV. It's hard to deceive anyone who has infinite faith! and here am I perspiring and flushing. . . . I'm going! (*Goes. He meets Katya and Yakov, coming toward him.*)

SCENE XIV.

PLATONOV, KATYA and YAKOV.

KATYA (*to Yakov*). Wait here. . . . I'll come back at once. . . . I only want to get a book. . . . Now, don't go away! (*Goes toward Platonov.*)

PLATONOV (*seeing Katya*). You? What do you want?

KATYA (*frightened*). Oh . . . It's you? I'm looking for you.

PLATONOV. It's you, Katya? Everyone, beginning with the mistress and ending with the [snub-nosed] chamber-maid, everyone is a night-bird! What do you want?

KATYA (*quietly*). My mistress has sent you a letter.

PLATONOV. What?

KATYA. My mistress has sent you a letter.

PLATONOV. Why are you lying? What mistress?

KATYA (*in a lower voice*). Sofya Egorovna. . . .

PLATONOV. What? Are you out of your wits? Try a cold shower! Get out!

KATYA (*handing him a letter*). Here it is!

PLATONOV (*snatching the letter*). Letter . . . letter . . . What letter? Couldn't you wait until tomorrow? (*Opens the letter.*) How am I to read it?

KATYA. She's asked you to do it as soon as possible. . . .

PLATONOV (*lighting a match*). The devil himself has brought you here! (*Reads.*) "I am taking the first step. Come, we'll take it together. I am rising from the dead. Come and take me. I am yours." The devil knows . . . Some sort of telegram! "I shall wait until four o'clock in the summer-house near the four columns. My drunken husband has left with young Glagolyev on a hunting expedition. All yours, S." As if there wasn't enough without this! That's all that was necessary! (*To Katya.*) Why are you staring?

KATYA. Why shouldn't I look, if I have eyes!

PLATONOV. Gouge your eyes out! Is this letter for me?

KATYA. For you. . . .

PLATONOV. You lie! Get out!

KATYA. Very well. (*Goes away with Yakov.*)

SCENE XV.

PLATONOV (*alone*).

PLATONOV (*after a pause*). So here are the consequences. . . . I've played my rôle too well! I've hurt a woman, a living creature, quite without any reason or need. . . . My accursed tongue! What it's brought me to. . . . What's to be done now? Well, wise head, do a little reflecting! Curse yourself, tear your hair. . . . (*Lapses into thought.*) Shall I leave? That's what I ought to do . . . leave this place at once and not show my face until Judgment Day! Yes, go from here and learn the hard hand of need, of labour! Better a hard life than this one with all its past! (*Pause.*) I'm going. . . . But . . . Surely Sofya doesn't really love me? Yes? (*Laughs.*) Why? How dark and strange everything is in this world! (*Pause.*) Strange . . . Surely this lovely, statuesque woman with wonderful hair isn't capable of loving a poor, queer fellow like me? How can she love me? It's incredible! (*Lights a match and scans the letter.*) Yes . . . Me? Sofya? (*Laughs.*) She loves me? (*Presses his hands to his breast.*) Oh, happiness! What happiness! It will be a new life for me, with new faces and new scenery! I'm going!

March to the summer-house near the four columns! Wait for me, my Sofya! You were and will be mine! (*He walks, then pauses.*) No, I'm not going! (*Walks back.*) What, break up a family? (*He shouts.*) Sasha, I'm coming! Open the door! (*Presses his hands to his head.*) No, I'm not going, I'm not going. . . . I'm not going! (*Pause.*) I am going! (*Goes.*) Go, break up things, stamp on them, defile them. . . . (*Stumbles on Voinitzev and Glagolyev II.*)

SCENE XVI.

PLATONOV, VOINITZEV and GLAGOLYEV II.

VOINITZEV and GLAGOLYEV II (*come running on the scene with rifles across their shoulders*).

VOINITZEV. There he is! There he is! (*Embraces Platonov.*) Well? Are you going to join us in a hunt?

PLATONOV. No . . . Wait!

VOINITZEV. What's the matter with you, friend? (*Laughs.*) Ah, you're drunk! Drunk! Is it the first time you're drunk? My God, how happy I am! My friend! (*Embraces Platonov.*) Are you coming? She sent me. . . . Asked me to bring some wild fowl home. . . .

GLAGOLYEV II. Don't let's put matters off! The light's already breaking. . . .

VOINITZEV. Have you heard what we've thought of? It's a real stroke of genius! We're thinking of putting Hamlet on! Upon my word! What a show it will be! (*Laughs.*) How pale you are. . . . Are you drunk?

PLATONOV. Yes-s . . . I'm drunk.

VOINITZEV. Stop. . . . It's my idea! Tomorrow we begin preparing the scenery! I shall be Hamlet,

Sofya—Ophelia. You will be Claudius, Triletzky—Horatio. . . . How happy I am! How satisfied! Shakespeare, Sofya, you and *maman!* I don't need anything more! Perhaps only Glinka's music! Nothing more! I shall be Hamlet. . . .

This was your husband. Look you now, what follows. . . .

(*Laughs.*) Am I not Hamlet?

PLATONOV (*breaks from his embrace and runs*). Scoundrel! (*Runs away.*)

[ECHO. Scoundrel . . . drel . . . drel . . .]

VOINITZEV. Tiu-liu-liu! Drunk! Splendid! (*Laughs.*) Look at our friend!

GLAGOLYEV II. Plenty of spirits in him. . . . Let's start!

VOINITZEV. Yes, let's. You too would have been my friend, if . . . The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons be all my sins remembered! (*They go.*)

(*The sound of an approaching train is heard.*)

SCENE XVII.

OSSIP and later SASHA.

OSSIP (*comes running in with the chain*). Where is he? (*Glances round.*) Where is he? Is he gone? Isn't he here? (*Whistles.*) Mikhail Vassilyitch! Mikhail Vassilyitch! Ai! (*Pause.*) Not here! (*Runs to the window and knocks.*) Mikhail Vassilyitch! Mikhail Vassilyitch! (*Breaks a windowpane.*)

SASHA (*from the window*). Who's there?

OSSIP. Call Mikhail Vassilyitch! Only be quick!

SASHA. What's happened? He's not in the house!

OSSIP (*shouting*). He's not here? That means, he's gone to the general's widow! The widow was here and asked him to come to her! Everything's lost, Alexandra Ivanovna! He went to the widow, the accursed man!

SASHA. You lie!

OSSIP. May God punish me if he hasn't gone to the widow! I saw and heard everything! They embraced and kissed each other here. . . .

SASHA. You lie!

OSSIP. May neither my father nor my mother see the Kingdom of Heaven if I lie! He went to the general's widow, I tell you! He left his wife! Go

after him, Alexandra Ivanovna! No, no! Everything's lost! And you're an unhappy woman now! (*He takes his gun from his shoulders.*) She gave me orders for the last time, and I shall carry them out for the last time! (*Shoots into the air.*) If I only meet him! (*Throws the gun on the ground.*) I'll cut his throat, Alexandra Ivanovna! (*Jumps over the mound and sits down on the wood stump.*) Don't you worry, Alexandra Ivanovna . . . don't you worry! I'll cut his throat. . . . Have no doubt about it. . . .

(*Railway signal lights appear.*)

SASHA (*comes out in her night-jacket, and her hair all loose*). So he's gone. . . . He's duped me. . . . (*Weeps.*) I'm lost. . . . Kill me, oh Lord, after this. . . . (*Whistle of train is heard.*) I'll throw myself under the train. I don't want to live. . . . (*Lies down on the rails.*) So he's duped me. . . . Kill me, Mother of God! (*Pause.*) Forgive me, oh Lord. . . . Forgive me. . . . (*She shouts.*) Kolya! (*Raises herself to her knees.*) My son! Save me! Save me! There comes the train! Save me!

OSSIP (*jumps to save Sasha*).

SASHA (*falling on the rails*). Ah-h . . .

OSSIP (*picking her up and carrying her into the school-house*). I'll cut his throat. . . . Don't you worry!

(*The train passes by.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III.

Scene:

A room in the school-house. To right and left, doors. China cupboard, chest of drawers, old piano, chairs, divan, guitar, etc. Complete disorder.

SCENE I.

SOFYA EGOROVNA and PLATONOV.

PLATONOV (*sleeping on the divan, by the window, his face covered with a straw hat*).

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*waking Platonov*). Platonov! Mikhail Vassilyitch! (*Shakes him.*) Wake up! Misha! (*Removes the hat from his face.*) How can you put such a filthy hat on your face? Fie, what a slovenly, dirty man! He's lost his shirt studs, and he sleeps with exposed breast, unwashed, and in a dirty shirt. . . . Misha! I'm talking to you! Get up!

PLATONOV. Ah?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Wake up!

PLATONOV. Later. . . . Very well. . . .

SOFYA EGOROVNA. You've slept enough! Get up!

PLATONOV. Who is it? (*Raising his head.*) Is it you, Sofya?

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*showing him the watch*). Look!

PLATONOV. Very well. . . . (*Lies down again.*)

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Platonov!

PLATONOV. What do you want? (*Raises himself.*) Well?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Look at the time!

PLATONOV. What of it? Here you are again, Sofya, with your whims!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Yes, I'm here again with my whims, Mikhail Vassilyitch! Please look at the watch! What's the time?

PLATONOV. Half past seven!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Half past seven. . . . Have you forgotten your promise?

PLATONOV. What promise? Speak clearly, Sofya! I'm neither disposed to joke today, nor solve nonsensical riddles!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. What promise? And so you've forgotten! What's the matter with you? Your eyes are red, you look seedy. . . . Are you ill? (*Pause.*) Your promise was to show up at the cottage at six o'clock! Have you forgotten? The hour is long past. . . .

PLATONOV. What then?

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*sitting down beside him*). Aren't you ashamed? Why didn't you come? You gave your word of honour. . . .

PLATONOV. I should have kept it too if I hadn't fallen asleep. . . . You saw that I was asleep. Why do you keep at it?

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*shaking her head*). You're wholly without a conscience! Why do you look so spitefully at me? You surely haven't shown much conscience in your relations with me. . . . Think it over. . . .

Have you shown up even once when you promised? How many times have you broken your word?

PLATONOV. I am very glad to hear it!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. That's not clever of you, Platonov. It's shameful! Why are you ceasing to be noble and intelligent when I'm with you? Why are you acting in plebeian fashion, unworthy of a man to whom I'm obligated for a renewal of my spiritual life? Nowadays you conduct yourself before me like some monstrosity. . . . Neither a single tender look, nor a tender word, and not one word of love! I come to you, and you reek of wine, you're attired abominably, you're unkempt, you answer rudely and irrelevantly.

PLATONOV (*jumping up and pacing back and forth*). She's come!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Are you drunk?

PLATONOV. What business is it of yours?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. How nice this is! (*Weeps.*)

PLATONOV. Oh, women!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Don't talk to me about women! A thousand times a day you talk to me about them! I'm tired of it! (*She rises.*) What are you doing with me? I am ill because of you! Day and night I have a pain in my breast, by your grace! You don't see it? You don't want to know it! You loathe me! If you really loved me, you'd not dare to treat me like this! I'm not some common wench. . . . I won't

allow anyone to . . . (*Sits down.*) For God's sake! (*Weeps.*)

PLATONOV. Enough!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Why are you killing me? Not three weeks have passed by since that night, and look at me! I'm as thin as a rail! Where's the happiness you promised me? How is it all going to end? Just think it over, if you're an honest, noble, intelligent man! Think it over, Platonov, before it's too late! Begin now. . . . Sit down on this chair, chuck everything out of your head, and just reflect on one thing; what you're going to do with me.

PLATONOV. I can't think. (*Pause.*) You just think it over. (*Approaches her.*) Yes, think it over! I've deprived you of family, welfare, future. . . . Why? With what object? I've robbed you, as if I were your worst enemy! What can I give you? How can I pay you for your sacrifices? This illegal knot is your unhappiness, your ruin! (*He sits down.*)

SOFYA EGOROVNA. I've entered into a union with you, and you dare to call it an illegal knot!

PLATONOV. Eh-h . . . It's no time for quibbling! You have your outlook on this union, I have mine. . . . I've ruined you, that's all there's to it! And not you alone. . . . Just wait and hear the song your husband will sing when he finds out!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. You're afraid of what he'll do to you?

PLATONOV. I'm not afraid of that. . . . But I'm afraid that it'll kill him. . . .

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Why, then, you faint-hearted man, did you come to me, if you knew that it would kill him?

PLATONOV. Please don't make it so pathetic! And why did you . . . In any case . . . (*Makes a helpless gesture with his hand.*) To talk with you is only to make you cry. . . .

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Yes, yes . . . I never cried before I came to you! But tremble! He already knows!

PLATONOV. What!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. He already knows.

PLATONOV (*rising to his feet*). He?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Yes, he. . . . I told him about it today. . . .

PLATONOV. You're joking. . . .

SOFYA EGOROVNA. You are pale! I ought to hate you instead of loving you! I went out of mind. . . . I don't know for what. . . . Why do I love you? And he already knows! (*Catching his sleeve.*) Tremble, then tremble! He knows everything! I swear to you on my honour, he knows everything! Tremble!

PLATONOV. Impossible! That's impossible. (*Pause.*)

SOFYA EGOROVNA. He knows everything. . . . It had to be done sooner or later!

PLATONOV. Then why don't you tremble? What did you tell him?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. I told him that I had already . . . that I couldn't . . .

PLATONOV. What did he do?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. He looked like you. . . . He was frightened! Your face at this moment looks unbearable!

PLATONOV. What did he say?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. He thought at first I was joking. But when he was convinced to the contrary, he grew pale, then tottered, began to cry, to crawl on his knees before me. . . . His face was as repulsive as yours is now!

PLATONOV. What have you done, you insolent woman? (*Presses his hands to his head.*) You've killed him! How can you, how dare you speak so coldbloodedly? You've killed him! Did you . . . name me. . . .

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Yes. . . . I couldn't have done it otherwise.

PLATONOV. What did he say?

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*springing to her feet*). Isn't it time you showed some sense of shame, Platonov? You don't know what you're saying! You seem to think I shouldn't have told!

PLATONOV. It wasn't necessary! (*Flings himself on the divan, face down.*)

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Honest man, what are you saying?

PLATONOV. It would have been more honest not to say anything. This will kill him! We've killed him!

So he cried, and crawled on his knees. . . . Ah! (*He springs to his feet.*) Unhappy man! If it were not for you, he'd never have known of our union . . . not if we waited until he died!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. I was obliged to have an explanation with him. I'm an honest woman.

PLATONOV. Do you know what you've done? You've parted with your husband forever!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Yes, forever. . . . Could it have been otherwise? Platonov, you're a scoundrel to talk like that!

PLATONOV. Forever. . . . What will become of you when we part company? And we shall part soon! You'll be the first to see the mistake you've made, you'll be the first to open your eyes. . . . You yourself will want to leave me! . . . In any case . . . do as you like, Sofya! You are more honest and intelligent than I . . . take this badly cooked stew into your hands! . . . I leave it to you to say and to do! Resurrect me from the dead, if you can! Raise me to my feet! Only be quick, for God's sake, or I'll go out of my mind!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. We leave here tomorrow.

PLATONOV. Yes, yes . . . The sooner the better!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. It's necessary to take you away from here. . . . I've written about you to mother. We'll go to her. . . .

PLATONOV. Where you like! I leave it to you!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Misha! We shall start our new

life. . . . Please understand that! . . . Listen to me, Mikhail! Leave it all to me! My mind is fresher than yours. Believe me, my dear! I will raise you to your feet! I'll take you where there's more light, where there's none of this filth, this dust, this laziness. . . . I shall make a human being of you. . . . I shall give you happiness! Yes, understand me. . . . (*Pause.*) I shall make a worker of you! We shall be human beings, Mikhail! We shall eat our own bread, we shall earn it by the sweat of our brows. . . . (*Puts her head on his breast.*) I mean to work, Misha. . . .

PLATONOV. Where will you work? There are stronger women than you, and even they act like lazy animals! You don't know how to work. Tell me what you will do? Our situation, Sofya, demands that we discuss the matter sanely and not try to console ourselves with illusions. . . .

SOFYA EGOROVNA. You'll see! I know the strong women you have in mind, but I'm stronger than they. . . . Believe me, Mikhail! I shall light up your path! You've resurrected me from the dead, and all my life shall be an expression of my gratitude. . . . Shall we leave tomorrow? Yes? I'm leaving now. . . . I must prepare for the journey. . . . You too get ready. . . . Come to the cottage at ten, and bring your things. . . . You'll come?

PLATONOV. I'll come.

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Give me your word of honour that you'll come!

PLATONOV. Ah-a-a-a . . . I've already given it!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Your word of honour!

PLATONOV. Here's my word! . . . I'll come!

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*laughing*). I believe! I believe! Come even earlier. . . . I'll be ready before ten. . . . We'll travel by night! We'll live yet, Mikhail! You don't understand your own happiness, you stupid man! I mean, our life, our happiness! To-morrow you'll be another man! We'll breathe new air; new blood shall course through our veins. . . . (*Laughs.*) Say good-bye to the decrepit man! Here's my hand! Press it hard! (*Gives him her hand.*)

PLATONOV (*kisses her hand*).

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Just wait, you clumsy man! I'll look for you. Don't get into a funk! Good-bye until later! I'll get ready in good time! (*Kisses him.*)

PLATONOV. Good-bye. . . . Did you say eleven or ten?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Ten. . . . Come even earlier! Good-bye! Dress a bit decently for the journey. . . . (*Laughs.*) I have money in my purse too. . . . We'll sup on the way. . . . Good-bye! I must be off and get ready. . . . Be cheerful now! I'll look for you at ten! (*Runs away.*)

SCENE II.

PLATONOV (*alone*).

PLATONOV (*after a pause*). It isn't a new song. . . . I've heard it a hundred times. . . . (*Pause.*) I must write him and Sasha a letter. . . . Let them weep a little . . . they'll forgive and forget! . . . Good-bye, village of Voinitzev! Good-bye, everything! Good-bye, Sasha! Good-bye, Anna Petrovna. . . . (*Opens the cupboard.*) Tomorrow I shall be a new man. . . . Startlingly new! What shall I put my clothes in? . . . I haven't a trunk. . . . (*Pours out some wine.*) Good-bye, School! (*Drinks.*) Good-bye, children! . . . Have I just been drinking? But why? I won't drink any more. . . . It's the last time. . . . I'll sit down and write a letter to Sasha. . . . (*Lies down on the divan.*) [Tomorrow I shall be a new man. . . . That's interesting! . . .] Sofya really believes. . . . Blessed are those that believe! . . . The widow will laugh, of course! How she will laugh! . . . It seems to me I've had a letter from her. . . . Where is it? (*Reaches for the letter on the window-sill.*) The hundredth, if not the two-hundredth, letter since that wild night. . . . (*Reads.*) "You, Platonov, for not answering my letters, are a

hard, boorish, rude fellow! If this letter, too, goes unanswered, then I shall appear at your place in person, the devil take you! I've waited a whole day for you. That's stupid of you, Platonov! One might think that you are ashamed of that night. Let's forget it, if it appears so banal to you! Sergey and Sofya are conducting themselves very poorly . . . it's the end of their honeymoon too. And all because a certain eloquent little blockhead hasn't been around. Good-bye!" (*Pause.*) What handwriting! So precise, yet so bold. . . . Commas, periods, the t's crossed and the i's dotted . . . everything's in its place. . . . A woman writing so accurately is a rare phenomenon. . . . (*Enter Marko.*) I suppose I'll have to write her a letter, or else she'll show up here. . . . (*Seeing Marko.*) An apparition. . . .

SCENE III.

PLATONOV and MARKO.

PLATONOV. What can I do for you? Whom do you want? (*Rises.*)

MARKO. For your Honour. . . . (*Takes a paper from his wallet.*) A summons for you, Sir. . . .

PLATONOV. Ah . . . Very good. . . . What sort of summons? From whom?

MARKO. From Ivan Andreitch, justice of the peace. . . .

PLATONOV. H'm . . . Justice of the peace? What's up? Give it here! (*Takes the summons.*) I don't understand. . . . Is he inviting me to a baptism? He's as fertile as a grasshopper, the old sinner! (*Reads.*) "In the quality of the defendant in the case of the active affront against the daughter of the State Councilor, Marya Efimovna Grekova." (*Laughs.*) Ah, the deuce take it! When will this case take place? The day after tomorrow? Very well, I'll come. . . . Tell the elder that I'll come. . . . A clever girl, by God, a clever girl! A smart wench! She should have done it long ago!

MARKO. A receipt, please!

PLATONOV. A receipt? Allow me to . . . Do you know, brother, you look startlingly like a shot duck!

MARKO. Can't say that . . .

PLATONOV (*sitting down by the table*). What do you resemble then?

MARKO. I'm made in God's own image. . . . [I'm a Christian, Sir, and I've served God and the Tsar a full twenty-five years. . . . I've taken the oath on the Holy Gospels. . . .]

PLATONOV. So . . . You've served under Tsar Nicholas?

MARKO. Just so. After the Sebastopol campaign I got my discharge papers. . . . Besides my service, I spent four years in a hospital bed. . . . A non-commissioned officer, Sir. . . . In the artillery. . . .

PLATONOV. So . . . Were the guns good?

MARKO. The common sort. . . . Of round diameter. . . .

PLATONOV. May I use a pencil?

MARKO. Yes . . . Received such and such a summons. . . . Then your name, paternity, and so on.

PLATONOV (*rising*). Here it is. Well, what about your justice of the peace? Is he still playing at cards?

MARKO. Quite so.

PLATONOV. From five o'clock in the evening till five o'clock the next evening?

MARKO. Quite so.

PLATONOV. He hasn't gambled away his chain yet?

MARKO. Not at all, Sir. . . .

PLATONOV. Tell him . . . No matter, don't tell him anything. Of course he doesn't pay his gambling losses. . . . He goes on playing, the stupid fellow, gets into debt, and has a whole pack of children. . . . Who are the witnesses? Who else is getting the summons?

MARKO (*looking through his papers and reading*). "To Doctor Nikolai Ivanovitch Triletzky . . ."

PLATONOV. Triletzky? (*Laughs.*) It'll be a comedy! And who else?

MARKO (*reading*). "To Mr. Kiryl Porfiritch Glagolyev; to Mr. Alfonse Ivanovitch Shrifter; his Honour, the retired cornet of the Guard, Maxim Egorovitch Aleutov; the son of the actual State Councilor, high-school student, Ivan Talye; the bachelor of the Saint Petersburg Neversity . . ."

PLATONOV. Is it actually written "Neversity" there?

MARKO. Not at all.

PLATONOV. Why, then, do you read it like that?

MARKO. Just from ignorance. . . . (*Reads.*) "Uni . . . uni . . . neversity, Sergey Pavlovitch Voinitzev; wife of the bachelor of the Saint Petersburg Uni . . . neversity, Sofya Egorovna, Mrs. Voinitzev; the student of Kharkov Neversity, Isaac Abramitch Vengerovitch." That's all! . . .

PLATONOV. H'm . . . This is after tomorrow, and I must leave tomorrow. Too bad. It promises to be quite a case. . . . H'm . . . It's really too bad! I

should have liked to satisfy her. . . . (*Walks up and down.*) Too bad. . . .

MARKO. Aren't you going to treat me to the price of a drink, your Honour. . . .

PLATONOV. Eh-h?

MARKO. A trifle for a drink. . . . I've walked six miles. . . .

PLATONOV. For a drink? . . . It's not necessary. . . . But what am I saying? Very well, my dear fellow! I shan't give you anything for a drink, but I'll do better than that. . . . It'll be more convenient for me, and more sober for you. . . . (*Takes a tea-canister out of the cupboard.*) Come here. . . . It's good, strong tea. . . . What shall I put it in?

MARKO (*opening his pocket*). Pour it in here. . . .

PLATONOV. What, straight into the pocket? Won't it give the tea a bad smell?

MARKO. Pour it in! Pour it in! Don't you worry on that account!

PLATONOV (*pouring the tea into the pocket*). Enough?

MARKO. I thank you most humbly.

PLATONOV. What an old fellow you are. . . . I like you old soldier boys! . . . You are the right sort! But even among you there are sometimes such terrible fellows. . . .

MARKO. To be sure, there are. . . . God alone is without sin. . . . Wishing you luck, Sir!

PLATONOV. Wait. . . . Just a moment. . . . (*He*

sits down and writes on the summons.) "I kissed you then, because . . . because I felt irritated and didn't know what I wanted. Now I would have kissed you as something sacred. I admit I acted like a beast. I've been a beast with everyone. Unfortunately, we shall not meet in the courtroom. Tomorrow I shall leave this place forever. I wish you happiness, and hope you will, at least, try and be just to me! I don't ask you to forgive me!" (*To Marko.*) Do you know where Grekova lives?

MARKO. I know. . . . Eight miles from here or so, if you ford the river.

PLATONOV. Oh, yes . . . She lives in Zhilkov. . . . Take her this letter and you'll get three silver pieces. Give it to the young lady herself, and don't wait for an answer. . . . If she gives you one, don't take it. . . . I want the letter delivered today. . . . At once. . . . Take it to her now, and you can deliver your other summonses afterward. (*Paces up and down.*)

MARKO. I understand.

PLATONOV. What else? Oh, yes! Tell everyone that I asked Grekova for forgiveness, and that she refused.

MARKO. I understand. The best of luck to you, Sir!

PLATONOV. Good-bye, my friend! Keep well!

MARKO (*exit*).

SCENE IV.

PLATONOV (*alone*).

PLATONOV. That means, Grekova and I are now quits. . . . She'll soil my name throughout the province. . . . So it should be. . . . For the first time in my life a woman is punishing me. . . . [After all, it was they that spoiled me. . . .] (*Lies down on the divan.*) You act meanly to them, and they hang on your neck. . . . Sofya, for example. . . . I used to be free as the wind, and I must lie here and reflect. . . . Love . . . *Amo, amas, amat* . . . I've tied myself up. . . . I've ruined her, and I've done no good for myself. . . . (*Sighs.*) The poor Voinitzevs! [You've paid dearly for your eloquent friend, Platonov!] And Sasha? Poor little girl! How will she manage to exist without me? She'll pine away, die. . . . When she saw the truth, she left with the infant, without saying a word. . . . After that night . . . I ought to say good-bye to her. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA (*through the window*). May I come in? Ay! Is anyone here?

PLATONOV. Anna Petrovna! (*Springs to his feet.*) She! What am I to say to her? Why should she come here? (*Straightens himself out.*)

ANNA PETROVNA (*through the window*). May I come in? I'm coming in, do you hear?

PLATONOV. So she's come! How can I keep her from coming in? (*Combs his hair.*) How can I dismiss her? I'd better have another drink before she comes in. . . . (*Quickly opens the cupboard.*) What the devil . . . I can't understand it! (*Drinks down his glass quickly.*) I hope she doesn't know anything, but suppose she does? I fear I'll blush. . . .

SCENE V.

PLATONOV and ANNA PETROVNA.

ANNA PETROVNA (*enters*).
PLATONOV (*slowly closes the cupboard*).
ANNA PETROVNA. I salute you!
PLATONOV. It won't shut. . . . (*Pause.*)
ANNA PETROVNA. Do you hear? I greet you!
PLATONOV. Oh, it's you, Anna Petrovna! Pardon me, I didn't see you. . . . This cupboard won't shut. . . . Strange. . . . (*Lets the key fall, and picks it up.*)
ANNA PETROVNA. Come here! Leave the cupboard in peace!
PLATONOV (*approaching her*). How do you do?
ANNA PETROVNA. Why don't you look at me?
PLATONOV. I'm ashamed. (*Kisses her hand.*)
ANNA PETROVNA. What are you ashamed of?
PLATONOV. Everything. . . .
ANNA PETROVNA. H'm . . . Have you seduced someone?
PLATONOV. Yes, something of the sort. . . .
ANNA PETROVNA. So that's it, Platonov! But whom?
PLATONOV. I won't tell you.
ANNA PETROVNA. Let's sit down. . . .(*They sit down*

on the divan.) We'll find out, young man, we'll find out. . . . But why should you be ashamed before me? Why, I've known your sinful soul ages ago. . . .

PLATONOV. Don't ask me, Anna Petrovna! I'm in no mood today to undergo a personal cross-examination. Say what you like, only don't ask questions of me!

ANNA PETROVNA. Good. Have you received my letter?

PLATONOV. Yes.

ANNA PETROVNA. Why didn't you show up?

PLATONOV. I couldn't.

ANNA PETROVNA. Why couldn't you?

PLATONOV. I couldn't.

ANNA PETROVNA. Are you sulky?

PLATONOV. No. Why should I sulk? Don't question me . . . for God's sake!

ANNA PETROVNA. Allow me to answer, Mikhail Vassilyitch! Sit quietly there! Why haven't you appeared at our house these past three weeks?

PLATONOV. I've been ill.

ANNA PETROVNA. You're lying!

PLATONOV. Yes, I am. Don't question me, Anna Petrovna!

ANNA PETROVNA. You reek of wine! Platonov, what does it all mean? What's the matter with you? What do you look like? Your eyes are red, your face ugly. . . . You are filthy, there's filth in the room. . . . Just have a look round you! What disorder! What's the matter with you? Do you drink?

PLATONOV. Terribly!

ANNA PETROVNA. H'm . . . It's last year's story all over again. . . . Last year you had been carrying on, and until the Autumn you were walking about like a wet hen. . . . So it is now. . . . A Don Juan and a pitiful coward in the same person. Don't you dare drink any more!

PLATONOV. I won't.

ANNA PETROVNA. On your word of honour? Anyhow, that's unnecessary! (*Rises.*) Where do you keep the wine?

PLATONOV (*pointing to the cupboard*).

ANNA PETROVNA. Aren't you ashamed, Misha, to show so little spirit? Where's your character? (*Opens the cupboard.*) And just look at the cupboard . . . what a mess! Won't Alexandra Ivanovna give it to you when she returns! Do you want her to return?

PLATONOV. I want only one thing: don't give me any questions, and don't look so straight into my face!

ANNA PETROVNA. Which bottle has the wine?

PLATONOV. All.

ANNA PETROVNA. All five? Oh, you drunkard! Why, you have a whole drinking establishment here! It's time Alexandra Ivanovna returned! You must make some sort of an explanation to her. . . . I am not the most terrible of rivals. . . . I'm willing to share. . . . I'm not one to separate you. . . . (*Drinks from a bottle.*) The wine is good. . . . Let's have a

drink together! Would you like to? Let's drink together now, and we won't drink again!

PLATONOV (*goes to the cupboard*).

ANNA PETROVNA. Hold your glass! (*Pours the wine.*) You're a bad man. But the wine is good! You have taste. . . . (*Gives him the bottle.*) Hold it! Bring it here! (*They go to the window.*) Say good-bye to your lovely wine! (*Looks out of the window.*) It's a shame to waste it. . . . Shall we have another drink, eh? Shall we?

PLATONOV. As you like.

ANNA PETROVNA (*pouring the wine*). Drink! . . . Quickly!

PLATONOV (*drinks*). To your happiness! May God grant you happiness!

ANNA PETROVNA (*pours herself out a glass and drinks*). Have you missed me? Let's sit down. Put the bottle down for the moment. . . . (*They sit down.*) Have you missed me?

PLATONOV. Every minute.

ANNA PETROVNA. Why, then, didn't you show up?

PLATONOV. Don't ask me! I'll tell you nothing, not because I'm not candid with you, but because I'm sorry for your ears! I'm going to ruin, complete ruin, my dear! I am suffering from a gnawing conscience, ennui, spleen . . . in a word, agony! You've come, and I already feel better.

ANNA PETROVNA. You've grown thin, you're looking badly. . . . I can't stand these romantic heroes!

What are you making of yourself, Platonov? Are you playing the rôle of a hero from a romance? Spleen, ennui, a conflict of the passions, love with prefaces. . . . Fie! Live like a human being! Live, stupid man, as human beings live! Are you an archangel of some sort that you can't live, breathe or sit like ordinary mortals?

PLATONOV. That's lightly said. . . . What's one to do?

ANNA PETROVNA. How can a human being, a man, live and not know what he should do? It's strange! What's he to do? I'll answer this question for you the best I know how, though such a question isn't worth an answer!

PLATONOV. You can't answer anything. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. In the first place, live in a human way; that is, don't drink and lie about, but wash yourself oftener and come to see me. In the second place, be content with what you have. . . . (*Rises.*) Come along to my house!

PLATONOV. How can I? (*Rises.*) Come to you? No, no . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. Come, I say! You'll see some people, you'll talk, listen, wrangle a bit. . . .

PLATONOV. No, no . . . Don't ask me.

ANNA PETROVNA. Why not?

PLATONOV. I can't. That's all there's to it!

ANNA PETROVNA. Of course, you can! Put your hat on! Come along!

PLATONOV. I can't, Anna Petrovna! Not for anything! I won't take a step from here!

ANNA PETROVNA. You can! (*Putting his hat on his head.*) Don't act the fool, Platonov! You're surely joking! (*Takes his arm.*) Well? One, two! . . . Come, Platonov! Forward! (*Pause.*) Come, Misha! Come!

PLATONOV. I can't.

ANNA PETROVNA. You're as stubborn as a bull! Come, march! One, two . . . Misha, sweetheart, darling. . . .

PLATONOV (*tearing away*). I won't come, Anna Petrovna!

ANNA PETROVNA. Let's take a walk round the school!

PLATONOV. Can't you let me alone! I told you I wouldn't come. I prefer to sit in my own house, and so please allow me to follow my inclinations! (*Pause.*) I won't come!

ANNA PETROVNA. H'm . . . I'll tell you what, Platonov . . . I'll lend you a little money. Why don't you go and take a little holiday of a month or two? . . .

PLATONOV. Where?

ANNA PETROVNA. In Moscow, in Petersburg. . . . Yes? Please do it, Mikhail! It'll do you good, you need an airing! Take a journey, look at new faces, visit the theatres, freshen yourself up a bit. . . . I'll let you have money, letters. . . . If you like, I'll go along with you! Would you like it? We'll

have a good time. . . . We'll return here renewed, brighter than we are. . . .

PLATONOV. A fine idea, but, unfortunately, unrealizable. . . . Tomorrow I shall leave this place, Anna Petrovna, but not with you!

ANNA PETROVNA. As you please. . . . Where are you going?

PLATONOV. I shall leave this place forever.

ANNA PETROVNA. Nonsense! (*Drinks from the bottle.*) Silly!

PLATONOV. Not at all nonsense, my dear! I shall leave this place, and I shall leave it forever!

ANNA PETROVNA. Why, you strange man?

PLATONOV. Don't ask! Upon my word, I'm leaving forever. Say good-bye to me! But don't question me! You'll learn nothing from me now. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. Nonsense!

PLATONOV. It's the last time we're seeing each other. . . . I shall disappear forever. . . . (*Takes her by the sleeve and afterwards by her shoulders.*) Forget the fool, the donkey, the wretch, the insolent fellow Platonov. . . . The earth shall swallow him up. . . . We'll meet, perhaps, after many, many years, when we shall be able to laugh about it all . . . or, like old folk, cry about it . . . but now, to the devil with him! (*Kisses her hand.*)

ANNA PETROVNA. Come, drink! (*Pours him out some wine.*) A drunken man's no sinner in chattering nonsense!

PLATONOV. I shan't be drunk. . . . I shall remember you, my good fairy! I shall never forget you! Laugh, you intelligent, radiant woman! Tomorrow I shall run from here. . . . I shall run from myself, whither I don't know. . . . I shall run towards a new life! I know what this new life is!

ANNA PETROVNA. All this is splendid, but what precisely has happened to you?

PLATONOV. What? I . . . You'll find out later! My friend, when you are shocked by my action, don't curse me! Please remember I'm already punished enough as it is. To part with you forever is a heavy punishment. . . . Why do you smile? Believe me! Upon my word, I speak the truth. . . . I feel so bitter at heart, and I feel so wretched and mean, that I should be glad if I could strangle myself!

ANNA PETROVNA (*through tears*). I can't think that you are capable of anything so appalling. . . . You will write me, at least?

PLATONOV. I shan't dare even to write you. And you will not want to receive any letters from me! It's absolutely forever. . . . Good-bye!

ANNA PETROVNA. H'm . . . You'll perish without me, Platonov! (*Rubs her forehead.*) I'm a trifle tipsy. . . . Let's leave together!

PLATONOV. No . . . Tomorrow you'll learn everything and . . . (*Turns away towards the window.*)

ANNA PETROVNA. Do you need any money?

PLATONOV. No.

ANNA PETROVNA. Ah . . . can't I help you?

PLATONOV. I don't know. . . . Send me today your photograph. (*Turns his face to her.*) Leave me, Anna Petrovna, or the devil knows what I won't do! I'll break out weeping, or I'll do harm to myself and . . . Go away! . . . Don't I speak plainly? What are you waiting for? I must leave, do you understand that? Why do you look at me like that?

ANNA PETROVNA. Good-bye. . . . (*Gives him her hand.*) We'll meet again. . . .

PLATONOV. No. . . . (*Kisses her hand.*) It's not necessary. . . . Now go, my dear. . . . (*Kisses her hand.*) Good-bye. . . . Leave me. . . . (*Covers his face with her hand.*)

ANNA PETROVNA. My dearest . . . poor boy! Well? Let go my hand. . . . Good-bye! Shall we have a last drink for parting's sake? (*Pours out some wine.*) Drink! . . . A happy journey, and then more happiness!

PLATONOV (*drinks*).

ANNA PETROVNA. You'd better remain here, Platonov! (*Pours out and drinks.*) You might live quite decently. . . . What crime could you be guilty of? Is such a thing possible in this village? (*Pause.*) Shall we have another to our grief?

PLATONOV. Yes.

ANNA PETROVNA (*pouring out*). Drink, my soul. . . . Ah, the deuce take it!

PLATONOV (*drinking*). Be happy! Go on living here. . . . That's possible even without me. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. No half way with me. . . . (*Pours more wine.*) If you drink you die, if you don't drink you also die. . . . Then it's better to drink and to die. . . . (*Drinks.*) I'm a drunkard, Platonov. . . . [While my general was alive, I drank heavily. . . . I drank and drank and drank. . . . And I'll go on drinking!] Eh? Shall I pour out another? No, I had better not. . . . We'll become tongue-tied, then how shall we speak? (*Sits down.*) There's nothing worse in the world than to be a developed woman. . . . There's nothing for her to do. . . . What am I worth, for what do I live? (*Pause.*) Willy-nilly, I am immoral. . . . I'm an immoral woman, Platonov. . . . (*Laughs.*) Eh? And I love you, perhaps, because I am immoral. . . . (*Rubs her forehead.*) I shall perish. . . . Such as I always perish. . . . If I were only a professor or a director of some sort. . . . If I were a diplomatist, I'd turn things topsy-turvy in this world. . . . A developed woman and . . . without anything to do. That means, I'm superfluous. . . . Horses, cows and dogs are wanted, but I'm not wanted, I'm superfluous. . . . Eh? Why don't you say something?

PLATONOV. We're both badly off . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. If I only had children. . . . Do you love children? (*Rises.*) Remain here, my dear! Will you remain? You might have a decent life here.

. . . It's cheery and friendly. . . . You're leaving, but what of me? I'd like to rest a little . . . Misha! I must have some rest! I want to be a wife, a mother. . . . (*Pause.*) Don't remain silent! Speak! You will remain, won't you? For you do love me, you strange fellow? You do love me?

PLATONOV. I'll kill myself, if I remain.

ANNA PETROVNA. You do love me?

PLATONOV. Who doesn't love you?

ANNA PETROVNA. You love me, and I love you, what more can you want? It must be, you're going out of your mind. . . . What more can you want? Why didn't you come to me that night? (*Pause.*) You'll stay?

PLATONOV. Go, for God's sake! Don't torment me!

ANNA PETROVNA (*giving him her hand*). Well . . . in that case . . . I wish you the best of luck. . . .

PLATONOV. Please go, or I'll tell you everything, and if I tell you, I'll surely kill myself!

ANNA PETROVNA. Here's my hand. . . . Don't you see it? I'll run in this evening for a minute. . . .

PLATONOV. It's not necessary! I'll come to you to say good-bye. . . . No, I shan't come to you! You'll not see me again, and I'll not see you again! You'll not want to see me when you find out! You'll turn away from me forever! My new life . . . (*Embraces and kisses her.*) For the last time. . . . (*Pushes her out-of-doors.*) Good-bye! Go, and be happy! (*Shuts and bolts the door.*)

ANNA PETROVNA (*behind the door*). I swear by God, we'll meet again!

PLATONOV. No! Good-bye! (*Stops his ears with his fingers.*) I hear nothing! Be silent, and go away! I've stopped my ears!

ANNA PETROVNA. I'm going! I'll send Sergey to you, and I give you my word you're not going away, and if you are, I'm going away with you! Good-bye! (*Pause.*)

SCENE VI.

PLATONOV (*alone*).

PLATONOV. Gone? (*Goes to the door and listens.*) Yes, she's gone. . . . Is it possible that she hasn't? (*Opens the door.*) She's a witch. . . . (*Glances behind the door.*) She's gone. . . . (*Lies down on the divan.*) Good-bye, lovely woman! . . . (*Sighs.*) I'll never see you again. . . . She's gone. . . . I wish she had stayed another five minutes. . . . (*Pause.*) It would have been pleasant! I must ask Sofya to put off the journey for a fortnight, and take a little journey with the widow! Yes . . . just for a fortnight! Sofya will agree to it. . . . She can stay with her mother for a while. . . . I'd better ask her. . . . While I'm travelling with the widow, Sofya can take a little rest. . . . After all, I shan't be gone forever! (*There is a knock on the door.*) Yes, I'm going! That's settled! Excellent! (*The knock is repeated.*) Who's knocking? Anna Petrovna? Who's there? (*Again, there is a knock.*) What's the matter with you? (*Rises.*) I shan't let you in! (*Goes to the door.*) Someone's giggling, I think. . . . (*Laughs.*) It's she . . . I must let her in. . . . (*Opens the door.*) Oh! (*Enter Ossip.*)

SCENE VII.

PLATONOV and OSSIP.

PLATONOV. What is it? You, devil? Why have you come?

OSSIP. How do you do, Mikhail Vassilyitch!

PLATONOV. What have you to say? To what do I owe the pleasure of a visit from such a worthy person? Say quickly what you have to say, then go to the devil!

OSSIP. I'll sit down. (*He sits down.*)

PLATONOV. Do me the favour! (*Pause.*) So it's you, Ossip? What's the matter with you? On your face are inscribed all the ten plagues of Egypt! What have you done to yourself? You look pale, thin, emaciated. . . . Are you ill?

OSSIP. You also have plagues written on your face. . . . And what have you done with yourself? The devil will take me, but you?

PLATONOV. I? I'm not acquainted with the devil. . . . I'll take myself. . . . (*Touches Ossip's shoulder.*) Only bones!

OSSIP. And where's your fat? Are you ill, Mikhail Vassilyitch? From good conduct?

PLATONOV (*sitting down*). Why have you come?
OSSIP. To say good-bye.
PLATONOV. Why, are you leaving?
OSSIP. No, I'm not leaving, but you are.
PLATONOV. So that's it! How do you know?
OSSIP. How shouldn't I know!
PLATONOV. I'm not leaving, brother. You've come for nothing.
OSSIP. You are leaving. . . .
PLATONOV. You know everything, and you make everything your business. . . . You're a wizard, Ossip. I am leaving. You are right.
OSSIP. There, you see, I know. I even know where you are going.
PLATONOV. Yes? What a fellow you are. . . . But I don't know. You're quite a clever chap! Well, tell me, where?
OSSIP. Do you want to know?
PLATONOV. Of course! Tell me. How interesting! Where am I going?
OSSIP. To the other world.
PLATONOV. That's a long way! (*Pause.*) A riddle. And are you going to dispatch me there?
OSSIP. Quite so. I've brought you some post-horses.
PLATONOV. How kind of you! H'm . . . So you've come to kill me?
OSSIP. Quite so.
PLATONOV (*mimicking*). Quite so. . . . What insolence! So you've come to dispatch me to the other

world. . . . H'm . . . Are you going to kill me on your own account or by someone's order?

OSSIP (*showing a roll of money*). Here. . . . Vengerovitch gave this to me and asked me to cut you up! (*Tears the money.*)

PLATONOV. Aha . . . Old Vengerovitch?

OSSIP. The same. . . .

PLATONOV. Why did you tear up the money? Is it to show your bigness of soul, eh?

OSSIP. I have no bigness of soul to show. But I've torn up the money so you won't think in the other world that I killed you for money.

PLATONOV (*rises and paces up and down*).

OSSIP. So you're afraid, Mikhail Vassilyitch? Horrible, isn't it? (*Laughs.*) Run, shout! I'm not standing by the door, I'm not holding the door; the door is open! Run out, call the people, tell them that Ossip's come to kill you! I have come to kill you. . . . You don't believe me? (*Pause.*)

PLATONOV (*goes to Ossip and looks at him*). Astonishing! (*Pause.*) Why do you smile? Fool! (*Strikes his hand.*) Stop smiling! I'm speaking to you! Be silent! I'll hang you! I'll make putty out of you, you scoundrel! (*Walks quickly away from him.*) Anyhow . . . Don't make me angry. . . . It's bad for me to be angry. . . .

OSSIP. Strike me across the cheek for being a noxious person!

PLATONOV. As much as you like! (*Goes to Ossip and*

strikes him across the cheek.) Well? Did that make you reel? It's nothing to the way you'll reel when you get a hundred strokes across your empty skull! Do you remember how Filka died?

OSSIP. A dog's death.

PLATONOV. How repugnant you are, you beast! I'm ready to destroy you, you wretch! What have human beings done to you that you're ready to do them harm? Oh, you insolent scoundrel! (*Strikes him across the cheek.*) Monster! I'll give it to you. . . . I'll . . . (*Quickly walks away from Ossip.*) Get out!

OSSIP. Spit into my eyes for being a noxious man!

PLATONOV. I don't like wasting any spit!

OSSIP (*rising*). You dare to talk like that?

PLATONOV. Get out, before I mix you up with mud!

OSSIP. You don't dare! You too are a noxious man!

PLATONOV. What? You're going to argue with me? (*Approaches him.*) So you've come to kill me? Well, then. Kill me! Here I am! Kill me!

OSSIP. I respected you, Mr. Platonov. I considered you a decent sort of man! But now . . . It's a pity to kill you, but it's got to be done. . . . You're very noxious. . . . Why did the young mistress come to you today?

PLATONOV. Kill me! Go ahead, kill me!

OSSIP. And why did the general's widow come here today? You're duping the widow, aren't you? And where's your wife? Which of the three is the real

one? Eh? Aren't you a noxious man after all that? (*Quickly trips him over with his foot, and they fall together on the floor.*)

PLATONOV. Get out! I'll kill you, not you me! I am stronger than you! (*They grapple.*)

OSSIP. Give my regards to General Voinitzev when you land in the other world!

PLATONOV. Let me go!

OSSIP (*drawing a knife from under his belt*). Be quiet! I'll kill you all the same! You're strong too! You don't want to die! You should have thought of that when you touched something which didn't belong to you!

PLATONOV (*shouting*). My hand! Oh, my hand! Stop! Stop!

OSSIP. So you don't want to die? You'll soon be in the Kingdom of Heaven!

PLATONOV. Let go my hand! Let go, Ossip! I have a wife, a son. . . . So you have a knife! Curse you! (*Sasha comes running in.*)

SCENE VIII.

The SAME and SASHA.

SASHA (*running in*). What's the matter? (*Makes an outcry.*) Misha! (*Runs to the wrestling men, and falls upon them.*) What are you doing?

OSSIP. It's you, Alexandra Ivanovna? (*Jumps up.*) His luck to stay alive! (*To Sasha.*) Here's a knife for you! (*Gives her the knife.*) I shan't kill him before you. . . . He'll stay alive! But I'll get him later! He shan't escape me. (*Jumps out of the window.*)

PLATONOV (*after a pause*). The devil! . . . Well, Sasha? (*Groans.*)

SASHA. Has he hurt you? Can you get up? Try it!

PLATONOV. I don't know. . . . That beast's made of cast-iron. . . . Give me your hand! (*Rises to his feet.*) Don't be frightened, my dear. I'm quite whole. But he's mauled me a bit.

SASHA. What a nasty fellow! I've warned you to keep away from him!

PLATONOV. Where's the divan? Why do you look at me like that? Your betrayer is still alive! Can't you see? (*Lies down on the divan.*) Thanks for coming,

or you might have been a widow by now, and I a corpse!

SASHA. Put your head on the pillow! (*Puts a pillow under his head.*) That's better! (*Sits down at his feet.*) Have you any pain? (*Pause.*) Why did you shut your eyes?

PLATONOV. No, no . . . For no reason. . . . So you've come, Sasha! You've come, my treasure! (*Kisses her hand.*)

SASHA. Our Kolya is ill!

PLATONOV. What's wrong with him?

SASHA. He has a cough, fever, a rash. . . . It's two nights now he hasn't slept. . . . He'll neither drink nor eat. . . . (*Weeps.*) He's quite ill, Misha! I'm afraid for him, so afraid! And I dreamt a bad dream. . . .

PLATONOV. What's your brother doing about it? After all, he's a doctor!

SASHA. He? He's acted indifferently. Four days ago he looked in for a minute and went off again. I told him about Kolya's illness, but he only yawned. . . . He called me a fool. . . .

PLATONOV. He's a lazy fellow! He'll burst with yawning one day.

SASHA. What's one to do?

PLATONOV. We must hope. . . . You're staying with your father?

SASHA. Yes.

PLATONOV. And what does he do?

SASHA. He paces the rooms, smokes his pipe, and he's getting ready to pay you a visit. I arrived at his house distraught. Well, he soon guessed that I and you . . . What shall I do about Kolya?

PLATONOV. Don't worry overmuch, Sasha!

SASHA. How can I help worrying? If he should die, which God forbid, what will become of us?

PLATONOV. Yes . . . God won't take our little boy away from us! Why should he punish you? Surely, not because you married a good-for-nothing husband! (*Pause.*) Take care, Sasha, of our little man! Preserve him for me, and I promise you I'll make a man of him! [I'll show him the right path, I'll teach him how to atone for my sinner's life and the life of my fathers! I'll consecrate days and nights to him. . . .] His every step will be a joy to you! [He'll go far, will our Nikolai Mikhailovitch Platonov!] For, after all, poor chap, he's also a Platonov! It would be well if he changed his name. As a man, I'm small, but as a father I will be great! Don't be afraid for him! Oh, my hand! (*Groans.*) I have such a pain in my hand. . . . The scoundrel certainly mauled me badly. . . . What do you think is wrong with it? (*Examines his hand.*) It's red. . . . Oh, well, the deuce take it! And so, Sasha. . . . You'll be happy in your son! You laugh? . . . Go on laughing, my treasure! Now you're crying! Why are you crying? H'm . . . Don't cry, Sasha! (*Embraces her head.*) So you've come. . . . But why did

you leave? Don't cry, my dear! Why tears? Why, I love you, little girl! How I love you! Great is my guilt, but what's one to do? You must forgive me. . . . Well, well . . .

SASHA. Is the intrigue at an end?

PLATONOV. Intrigue? What a word!

SASHA. Then it isn't at an end?

PLATONOV. How shall I put it to you? There isn't any intrigue, but there is a perfect maze of nonsense. . . . Don't be alarmed about it! If it's not yet at an end, it will soon be!

SASHA. When?

PLATONOV. I think soon. We'll have our old life back again soon, never fear! Perish all this new life! It's quite exhausted me. . . . Believe no more in the strength of this knot than I do! She'll be the first to cool off, and will be the first, with laughter and sorrow, to see the absurdity of this knot. Sofya's no mate for me. There are ferments in her which long since have ceased to ferment in me. She looks with tears of emotion on that which I now can't look on without laughter. She's no mate for me. . . . (*Pause.*) Believe me! Sofya will not long remain your rival. . . . Sasha, what's the matter with you?

SASHA (*rises, tottering*).

PLATONOV (*raising himself*). Sasha!

SASHA. So it's with Sofya, not Anna Petrovna?

PLATONOV. So this is the first you've heard of it?

SASHA. With Sofya? . . . That's downright low. . . .

PLATONOV. What's the matter with you? You're pale, you totter. . . . (*Groans.*) At least, don't you torment me, Sasha! My hand hurts, and now you . . . Surely, that isn't news for you! Is it really the first you've heard of it? Didn't you leave on Sofya's account?

SASHA. It was bad enough going off with the widow, but with another man's wife! It's low, and sinful. . . . I didn't expect such perfidy from you! God will punish you! You have no conscience! (*Goes towards the door.*)

PLATONOV (*after pause*). You are shocked? Where are you going?

SASHA (*stopping in the doorway*). May God give you happiness! You and Sofya Egorovna.

PLATONOV. You've read too many foolish novels, Sasha! We still have a boy, and, after all, I'm your husband! Again, I don't want happiness! Remain here, Sasha!

SASHA. I can't! Oh, my God, my God. . . .

PLATONOV. You can't?

SASHA. My God. . . . Is it really true? (*Presses her hands against her temples and sits down.*) I . . . I don't know what to do. . . .

PLATONOV. You can't? (*Goes to her.*) It's up to you. . . . Better stay! Why cry, you silly? (*Pause.*) Ah, Sasha, Sasha. . . . My sin is great, but surely I may be forgiven. . . .

SASHA. Could you forgive it yourself?

PLATONOV. A philosophical problem! (*Kisses her head.*) Better stay. . . . Don't you see, I repent! Why, without you, there's nothing but vodka, filth, these Ossips. . . . I've been tormented to death! Stay here as a nurse, if not as a wife! You're a strange folk, you women! You're strange, Sasha! You can feed the wretch Ossip, you lavish mercy on cats and dogs . . . haven't you a crumb left for your erring but repentant husband? Why do you too act the executioner? Stay, Sasha! (*Embraces her.*) I can't do without a nurse! I'm a worthless fellow. I've taken away the wife of a friend, I'm Sofya's lover, I'm even Anna Petrovna's lover, I'm a polygamist, a great scoundrel from the point of view of a family. . . . Be shocked! Be indignant! But who will ever love as I love you? Who will value you as I do? For whom will you cook dinner and over-salt the soup? You, of course, have right on your side, if you go. . . . (*Lifts her.*) Who will lift you like this? Is it possible for you, my dear, to be without me?

SASHA. I can't! Let me go! I'm lost! You are jesting while I'm perishing! (*Breaks away from him.*) You know, it's no joke! Good-bye! I can't live with you! All will look on you now as on a dishonourable man! I can't stand it! (*Weeps.*)

PLATONOV. Go, and God be with you! (*Kisses her head, then lies down on the divan.*) I understand. . . .

SASHA. You've broken up our family. . . . We lived well, happily. . . . There was none happier than me on earth. . . . (*Sits down.*) What a mess you've made of life, Misha! (*Rises.*) What a mess you've made! You can't bring back our happiness. . . . I'm lost. . . . (*Weeps.*)

PLATONOV. Go, and God be with you!

SASHA. Good-bye! You'll not see me again! Don't come to see us. . . . Father will sometimes bring Kolya to you. . . . God will forgive you, as I forgive you! You've ruined our life!

PLATONOV. Have you gone?

SASHA. Yes, I've gone. . . . Very well. . . . (*Looks at Platonov for some time, then goes.*)

SCENE IX.

PLATONOV (*alone*) and, afterwards, VOINITZEV.

PLATONOV. Thus begins my new life! It's painful! I'm losing everything! . . . I'll go out of my mind! My God! [(*Bites the pillow.*)] Sasha, a mere flea . . . and even she dares to throw a stone at me! (*Lies down on the divan.*)

VOINITZEV (*enters and pauses in the doorway*).

PLATONOV (*after a pause*). Is this the epilogue, or is the comedy still in progress? (*On seeing Voinitzev he shuts his eyes and snores lightly.*)

VOINITZEV (*approaching Platonov*). Platonov! (*Pause.*) You're not sleeping. . . . I can see that from your face. . . . (*Sits down near him.*) I don't think you can be asleep. . . .

PLATONOV (*rising*).

VOINITZEV (*rises and looks out of the window*). You've killed me. . . . Do you know that? (*Pause.*) I thank you. . . . What do I want? God be with you. . . . Let it be as it is. Perhaps, it had to happen. . . . (*Weeps.*)

PLATONOV (*rises and slowly walks to another corner of the room*).

VOINITZEV. Once I received a gift from fortune and

. . . even this gift was taken from me! It was not enough that he should have a mind, beauty, a great soul. . . . He must needs have my happiness too! He's taken it away. . . . And I? What about me? I have nothing now. . . . So it is. . . .

PLATONOV. Go away from here!

VOINITZEV. Presently. . . . I've come to call you out to a duel, but now that I'm here I can do nothing but weep. . . . I'm going. (*Pause.*) Have I lost finally?

PLATONOV. Yes.

VOINITZEV (*whistling*). So it is. . . .

PLATONOV. Go away! I implore you! Go!

VOINITZEV. Presently. . . . What can I do here? . . . (*Goes to the door.*) I can do nothing here. . . . (*Pause.*) Give her back to me, Platonov! Be good! After all, she belongs to me! Platonov, you are happy as it is! Save me, dear fellow! Give her back to me! (*Weeps.*) After all, she's mine! Mine! Do you understand?

PLATONOV (*goes to the divan*). Go away! . . . I'll shoot myself . . . I swear on my honour!

VOINITZEV. No, don't! . . . God be with you! (*Makes a helpless gesture with his hand and goes out.*)

PLATONOV (*pressing his hands to his head*). Oh, unhappy, pitiful man! My God! Curses upon my head! (*Weeps.*) Vermin that I am, why don't I let people alone? I've brought nothing but misfortune upon people, and people have brought nothing but mis-

fortune upon me! I must let people alone! They go on beating me, and beating me, yet without killing me! A murderer sits in every corner, looks into my eyes, and wants to kill me! Go on beating me! (*Beats his breast.*) Beat me, as long as I haven't killed myself! (*Runs to the door, and shouts.*) Sasha! Sasha! For God's sake! (*Opens the door. Glagolyev I comes in.*)

SCENE X.

PLATONOV, GLAGOLYEV I, and afterwards GLAGOLYEV II.

GLAGOLYEV I (*enters, leaning on a stick*). I'm glad to find you at home, Mikhail Vassilyitch! Very glad. . . . I'm afraid I've disturbed you. . . . But I won't keep you long, only a minute or so. . . . I want to ask you one question. You answer me, and I'll go. What's the matter, Mikhail Vassilyitch? You are pale, and you shake and tremble so. . . . What's the matter with you?

PLATONOV. The matter with me? Eh? I am drunk, or . . . I'm going out of my mind! I am drunk . . . drunk. . . . My head goes round. . . .

GLAGOLYEV I (*aside*). I'll ask him. What the sober man has in his soul, the drunken man has on his tongue. (*To Platonov.*) The question is a strange one. You may even think it stupid. But for God's sake, answer me, Mikhail Vassilyitch! It's a life question with me! I'll believe your answer, because I know you for an honest man. . . . Let my question seem strange or stupid or even humiliating, but for Heaven's sake, give me an answer! I find myself in a terrible position. Our mutual acquaintance . . .

You know her very well. . . . I considered her perfection in the human sense of the word . . . Anna Petrovna Voinitzev. . . . (*Supports Platonov.*) Don't fall, for God's sake!

PLATONOV. Go! I always considered you a stupid old man!

GLAGOLYEV I. You are her friend, you know her as you know your five fingers. . . . She has been either slandered, or else . . . my eyes have been opened. . . . Is she an honest woman, Mikhail Vassilyitch? She . . . she . . . has she the right to be the wife of an honest man? (*Pause.*) I don't know how to formulate my question. . . . Please understand me, for God's sake! I've been told that she . . .

PLATONOV. Everything's degrading, low, filthy in this world! Everything . . . degrading . . . low. . . . (*Falls unconscious against Glagolyev and rolls on the ground.*)

GLAGOLYEV II (*entering*). Are you going to stick here forever? I don't feel like waiting!

GLAGOLYEV I. Everything's degrading, low, filthy. . . . That means, she's included too. . . .

GLAGOLYEV II (*looking at Platonov*). Father, what's the matter with Platonov?

GLAGOLYEV I. Disgracefully drunk. . . . Yes, degrading, filthy. . . . The deep, pitiless, painful truth! (*Pause.*) We're going to Paris!

GLAGOLYEV II. What? To Pa . . . To Paris? What do you want to go to Paris for? (*Laughs.*)

GLAGOLYEV I. To lie about like this fellow does!

GLAGOLYEV II. To lie about. . . . In Paris?

GLAGOLYEV I. We're going to try our luck in a new arena! Enough! Enough of playing a comedy for oneself, and of tormenting oneself with ideals! I have no more faith, or love! There are no human beings! We're going!

GLAGOLYEV II. To Paris?

GLAGOLYEV I. Yes. . . . If one is to sin, 'tis better to sin on alien soil, and not in one's own land! As we haven't yet rotted, we'll have a bit of life in human fashion! Be my teacher, son! We're going to Paris!

GLAGOLYEV II. That's the way to talk, father! You've taught me to read, and I'll teach you to live! We'll take the journey!

CURTAIN

ACT IV.

Scene:

Study of the late General Voinitzev. Two doors. Antique furniture, Persian rugs, flowers. The walls are adorned with rifles, pistols, Caucasian daggers, etc. Family portraits. Busts of Krylov, Pushkin and Gogol. Shelves with stuffed birds. A book-case, filled with books. On top of the book-case: all manner of military relics, boxes, sticks, etc. The writing-table is submerged under a mass of papers, portraits, statuettes and weapons. Time: morning.

SCENE I.

Enter SOFYA EGOROVNA and KATYA.

[KATYA. I can't find him anywhere!
SOFYA EGOROVNA. Where did you look for him?
KATYA. Everywhere. I haven't overlooked a single place. . . . Not a nook in the school that I haven't looked into. The doors and the windows are wide open, but he's not to be seen anywhere. I looked even in the cellar. A carpenter was sitting near the cellar, and I asked him . . . but he had seen nothing of him. Then I thought I'd have a look in the woods. . . .
SOFYA EGOROVNA. Did you look in at the priest's?
KATYA. Yes, and the reverend father said he hadn't seen Mikhail Vassilyitch in a week. . . . I looked in at the deacon's too. . . . And I saw Aleksey Makaritch, the copying clerk, and he knows no more than the rest. . . . Then I looked and looked for him in the wood. . . .]
SOFYA EGOROVNA. Be calm! Talk sense!
KATYA. Something wicked is happening, Madam! The doors are all open, everything in the room is turned topsy-turvy. . . . The door's broken from

its hinges. . . . Something awful's happened! No wonder one of our hens crowed like a cock!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. What do you think could have happened?

KATYA. I don't know what to think, Madam. I only know, something's happened. . . . Either Mikhail Vassilyitch left altogether, or else he's put an end to himself. He's very hot-headed!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Have you been to the village?

KATYA. Yes. . . . He wasn't there either. . . . I walked about for four hours. . . .

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*sitting down*). What's to be done? What's to be done? (*Pause.*) Are you sure that he's nowhere to be found? Are you sure?

KATYA. I don't know, Madam. . . . Something awful's happened. . . . Something in my heart tells me! Why don't you chuck it all, Madam! After all, it's a sin! (*Weeps.*) I'm sorry for the master, Sergey Pavlovitch. . . . He was such a handsome man, and look at him now! He's walking about like one out of his wits. . . . I'm sorry for him. . . . He used to be such a cheery man, and now he looks like death itself. . . . Chuck it, Madam!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Chuck what?

KATYA. Love. What sense is there in it? It only makes for scandal. I'm sorry for you too. You've changed these last days. You've grown thin, you neither eat nor drink, you don't sleep, and you do nothing but cough!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Go, Katya! Try once more. Maybe, he's returned to the school by now.

KATYA. At once. (*Pause.*) You'd better lie down.

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Go, Katya, and try again!

KATYA (*desperately*). Where is there left for me to go?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. I must go to bed. I haven't slept all night. Don't shout so! Go away!

KATYA. Very well. You're using yourself up . . . all for nothing! You ought to go to bed and have some rest, Madam! (*Goes.*)

SCENE II.

SOFYA EGOROVNA and afterwards VOINITZEV.

SOFYA EGOROVNA. It's terrible! Yesterday he gave me his word to appear at the cottage at ten o'clock, and didn't show up. . . . I waited until dawn for him. And he gave his word of honour! He doesn't love me! [He doesn't. Or he wouldn't subject me to this torture. . . . I love him only as a woman can love a man! I love even his faults. And he? (*Pause.*) No . . . he does love me. . . . Something must have happened. . . . Perhaps the school inspector had called him out into town. . . . No, no . . . He didn't come yesterday, he'll come today. . . . (*Rises.*)]

VOINITZEV (*entering*). I'll lie down, perhaps I'll manage to get to sleep. (*Seeing Sofya Egorovna.*) You . . . in my room? In my study?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. I here? (*Looks round her.*) Yes . . . I've come in here not meaning to. . . . (*Goes to the door.*)

VOINITZEV. One minute!

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*stopping*). Well?

VOINITZEV. Please give me two or three minutes. . . . You don't mind staying three minutes here?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Speak! Have you something to tell me?

VOINITZEV. Yes. . . . (*Pause.*) The time is past when we two had not been strangers in this room. . . .

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Yes, it's past.

VOINITZEV. Are you leaving?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Yes.

VOINITZEV. H'm . . . Soon?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Today.

VOINITZEV. With him?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Yes.

VOINITZEV. I wish you happiness! (*Pause.*) Good material for happiness! Passions of the flesh and the unhappiness of another. The unhappiness of another is always a source for someone's happiness! It's an old story. . . . A new lie is always more eagerly listened to than an old truth. . . . God be with you! Live as you know best!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. You wanted to tell me something.

VOINITZEV. Am I silent, then? Well, yes . . . This is what I wanted to say. . . . I want to be perfectly clean before you, not be in your debt, and so I ask you to forgive me for my yesterday's conduct. . . . I said many rude, spiteful things to you yesterday. . . . Forgive me, please. . . . You do forgive me?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. I forgive you. (*Starts to go out.*)

VOINITZEV. Don't go yet. I haven't said all I wanted to say! One thing more. (*He sighs.*) I'm mad, Sofya! I'm not strong enough to withstand this

terrible shock. . . . I'm mad, but I'm still able to understand everything. In the immeasurable fog of my mind there's one bright spot, which enables me to understand everything. . . . When this one bright spot leaves me, then . . . that will mean, I'm lost forever. I understand everything. . . . (*Pause.*) I am now standing in my study. This study once belonged to my father, His Excellency, Major-General Voinitzev, Cavalier of St. George, a great and splendid man! They saw only the spots on him. . . . They saw how he beat people and stamped on them, but how they beat him and stamped on him, no one wanted to see. . . . (*Points to Sofya Egorovna.*) This is my ex-wife.

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*trying to leave*).

VOINITZEV. Don't go yet. Allow me to finish! I speak stupidly, but you must hear me to the end . . . after all, it's the last time!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Why, you've said everything. . . . What else can you say? We must part. . . . What is there to say? You want to show that I'm guilty before you? Don't waste the effort! I know what I ought to think of myself. . . .

VOINITZEV. What can I say? Oh, Sofya, Sofya! You know nothing! Nothing. Or else you wouldn't look at me with such scorn! [It's terrible just to remember it! Do you know, what happened yesterday? Yesterday I almost killed Platonov! I brought a knife with me! If he hadn't awakened, I would have

killed him. I went for the sleeping, unarmed man with a knife in my hand!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. When?

VOINITZEV. Last evening! He saw!

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*sits down and covers her face*). What happened?

VOINITZEV. I wanted to kill him for taking my wife from me! I didn't want to let you go to him easily! If he hadn't awakened I would have killed him with that accursed dagger!] Ah, you don't know what's transpiring in my soul . . . it's something horrible! (*Falls on his knees before her.*) Think of what you are doing, Sofya! Where are you goading me on . . . and yourself? For God's sake, have pity! I'll go out of my mind! Stay with me! I'll forget everything, and I've already forgiven you. . . . I shall be your slave, I shall love you. . . . I shall love you as I have not loved before! I shall give you happiness! You shall be happy with me as a goddess! He's not the man to give you happiness! You'll only ruin yourself, and ruin him! You'll ruin Platonov, Sofya! . . . I know that one can't be loving by force, but stay! You'll be gay again. . . . You are so deathly pale now, so unhappy. . . . Again I'll be a human being, and he'll come and see us . . . Platonov! Please stay! We'll bring back the past, before it's too late! Platonov will agree. . . . I know him. . . . He doesn't love you. . . . It's just

that you gave yourself to him, and he took you. . . . (*He rises.*) Are you crying?

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*rising*). Don't take these tears to your account! Perhaps, Platonov will agree. Let him agree! (*Sharply.*) You're all nasty people! Where's Platonov?

VOINITZEV. I don't know where he is.

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Leave me in peace, won't you! I hate you! Get out! Where's Platonov? What nasty people. . . . Where is he? [Did you frighten him away with your knife?] I hate you!

VOINITZEV. Why?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. [You wanted to kill a sleeping man. Why, then, didn't you kill him when he awoke? Was it because a man awake is more dangerous than a man asleep?] Where is he?

VOINITZEV. I gave him some money, and he promised to go away.

SOFYA EGOROVNA. You bribed him? Why do you lie?

VOINITZEV. I gave him a thousand roubles, and he renounced you. Well, I am lying! It's all a lie! Don't believe me, for God's sake! This accursed Platonov is alive and well. Go, take him, exchange kisses with him! . . . No, I didn't bribe him! But surely, will you . . . will he . . . be happy? And this is my wife, my Sofya. . . . What does it all mean? I can't believe it even now! Are you on platonic relations with him? Did it get to . . . the last stage?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. I am his wife, his mistress. What

more do you want? (*Starts to go.*) Why do you hold me? I haven't the time to listen to all sorts of . . .

VOINITZEV. Wait, Sofya! So you're his mistress? You speak rather insolently! (*Seizes her hand.*) And you could do it! You could do it! (*Enter Anna Petrovna.*)

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Leave me in peace! (*Exit.*)

SCENE III.

VOINITZEV and ANNA PETROVNA.

ANNA PETROVNA (*comes into the room and looks out of the window*).

VOINITZEV (*gesturing with a hand*). Enough! (*Pause.*) What's going on there?

ANNA PETROVNA. The peasants have killed Ossip.

VOINITZEV. At last!

ANNA PETROVNA. Yes. . . . Near the well. . . . Do you see? There he is!

VOINITZEV (*joining her at the window*). Well? He got what he deserved. (*Pause.*)

ANNA PETROVNA. Have you heard the latest, sonny? Platonov, they say, has disappeared and . . . Have you read the letter?

VOINITZEV. Yes, I've read it.

ANNA PETROVNA. What do you think of this business of the estate? All gone . . . The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away. . . . There's a fine commercial conjuring trick for you! And all because we believed Glagolyev. . . . He promised to buy the estate, but didn't show up at the sale. . . . The servants say he left for Paris. . . . He's become rather sharp, the wretch has, in his old age! If it

weren't for him, you and I could have managed it by paying our interest, and gone on living here. . . . (*She sighs.*) One shouldn't believe one's enemies in this world, and it's the same with friends!

VOINITZEV. No, one shouldn't believe one's friends!

ANNA PETROVNA. Well, my feudal lord? What do you intend doing now? Where will you go? The Lord gave to your ancestors, but from you he has taken away. . . . You have nothing left. . . .

VOINITZEV. It's all the same to me.

ANNA PETROVNA. No, it's not the same. What are you going to eat? Let's sit down. . . . (*They sit down.*) How grave you are. . . . What's one to do? It's a pity to part from this little nest of ours, but what's one to do, my darling boy? What's done, can't be undone. . . . What's to be, must be. Be sensible, Sergey. First of all, you must remain cold-blooded.

VOINITZEV. Don't pay any attention to me, *maman.* What's there to say about me? Your own nerves are on edge at this moment. . . . Console yourself first, then come and console me.

ANNA PETROVNA. Well . . . women don't count. . . . Women always take a secondary place. . . . The first thing is to be cold-blooded! You have lost what you had, but what's yet before you is the important thing. And you have all life before you, a good, working, manly life! Why should you grieve? You can hold down a job in a high school. . . . You're a clever fellow. You know all about philol-

ogy, you are well-intentioned, you don't meddle in matters which don't concern you, you have convictions, tranquillity, and you have a wife. . . . If you only take care, you will go far! You're so clever! Only don't quarrel with your wife. . . . You're hardly over your honeymoon, and you're already wrangling with her. . . . Why don't you be frank with me? You appear to be suffering, yet you are silent. . . . What's passing between you?

VOINITZEV. It's not passing, but it has already passed.

ANNA PETROVNA. What could it be? Or is it a secret?

VOINITZEV (*sighing*). A terrible misfortune has crashed over our home, dear mother! Why haven't I told you about this before? I don't know. I kept on hoping, and I feel ashamed to talk about it. . . . I learned the truth only yesterday. . . . The loss of the estate I can bear!

ANNA PETROVNA (*laughing*). How you frighten me! Is she angry with you?

VOINITZEV. You may laugh! Wait, and you'll laugh in another fashion! (*Pause.*) She has betrayed me. . . . I have the honour of introducing to you a husband with horns on!

ANNA PETROVNA. What nonsense, Sergey! What stupid fancies! To talk about such monstrous things without reflecting! You astonish me! You pile on things so thick that one's ears can't stand it! A husband with horns. . . . Do you realize the gravity of the charge?

VOINITZEV. Of course, I know, mother. Not alone in a theoretical sense, but even in a practical!

ANNA PETROVNA. Don't shame your wife. . . . Ah . . .

VOINITZEV. I swear to you by God! (*Pause.*)

ANNA PETROVNA. It's strange. . . . You speak impossible things. It's impossible! Here in Voinitzevka!

VOINITZEV. Yes, here, in our accursed Voinitzevka!

ANNA PETROVNA. H'm . . . Who in this accursed Voinitzevka could have conceived the presposterous idea of placing horns on your aristocratic head? There's absolutely no one. The younger Glagolyev, perhaps? Glagolyev has stopped coming here. . . . There's no one here fit for Sofya. . . . It's stupid jealousy on your part, my dear!

VOINITZEV. Platonov!

ANNA PETROVNA. What about Platonov?

VOINITZEV. It is he.

ANNA PETROVNA (*springing to her feet*). It is possible to speak nonsense, but such nonsense as this. . . . Listen to me. . . . You've piled it on rather thick! You ought to know where to stop! This is unforgivably stupid!

VOINITZEV. Go and ask her, go and ask him, if you don't believe me! I didn't want to believe it myself, and I don't want to now, but she's leaving me today, going away! You must believe! And he's going with her! Can't you see that I'm walking about and looking on the world like a corpse! I'm lost, I tell you!

ANNA PETROVNA. It can't be, Sergey! It is the fruit of your boyish fancy! Believe me, there's nothing to it!

VOINITZEV. Believe me, she's going away today! Believe me, too, that during these past two days she has not ceased affirming that she was his mistress! She herself! It sounds incredible, but one must believe against one's wishes, against every desire to believe differently!

ANNA PETROVNA. Now I remember, I remember. . . . And I understand it all now. . . . So that's how it is! H'm . . . Wait, wait a moment, I'll recall everything in its proper order. . . . (*Pause. Enter Bugrov.*)

SCENE IV.

ANNA PETROVNA, VOINITZEV and BUGROV.

BUGROV (*entering*). How do you do! I hope you're well. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. Yes . . . yes . . . yes . . . It is terrible. . . .

BUGROV. It's raining out-of-doors, yet it's hot. . . . (*Wipes his forehead.*) Whew, I've almost roasted coming here. . . . Well, I hope! (*Pause.*) I've come to see you on account of what happened yesterday, when the sales took place, as you know. . . . As regards that, you know it was somewhat hard and shameful for you, and I . . . please don't take it ill from me. . . . It wasn't me who bought the estate! Abraham Abramitch bought it, but in my name. . . .

VOINITZEV (*ringing the bell hard*). May the devil take them all!

BUGROV. It's like that. . . . Don't think that. . . . No, it wasn't me. . . . It was only bought in my name! (*Sits down.*)

YAKOV (*comes in*).

VOINITZEV (*to Yakov*). How often I've asked you wretches (*coughs*) not to admit anyone without an-

nouncing the visitor's name! You ought to be flogged, every man's son of you! (*Flings the bell under the table.*) Get out! You wretches! (*Paces up and down.*)

YAKOV (*shrugging his shoulders, goes out*).

BUGROV (*coughing*). Only in my name, you see. . . . Abram Abramitch sends word that you may live here as long as you like, even until Christmas, if need be. . . . There will be certain repairs to be done, but well, they needn't hinder you. . . . If it comes to that, you can move into the wing. . . . There are many rooms here, and it's right warm too. . . . He also asked me to ask you if you won't sell, that is in my name, your mines. . . . The mines are yours, Anna Petrovna. Wouldn't you like to sell them now? We'll give you a good price for them. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. No. . . . We shan't sell these mines to one devil or another! What will you give me for them? A farthing? Take the farthing and choke on it!

BUGROV. Abram Abramitch has also asked me to tell you that if it won't be convenient for you to sell him your mines to cover the debt owed him by Sergey Pavlitch and his dead father, his Excellency Pavel Ivanitch, then he will protest the note. . . . I too will protest with him. . . . (*Titters.*) Friendship's one thing, money another. . . . Commerce! It's such an accursed affair. You see . . . I bought your notes from Petrin. . . .

VOINITZEV. I'll not allow anyone to count on my mother's property! Her property is not mine to sell! And I haven't time to chatter with you. . . . Do what you like!

ANNA PETROVNA. Leave us in peace, Timofey Gordeitch! I'm sorry. . . . I must ask you to go!

BUGROV. Very well. . . . (*Rises.*) Don't be disturbed. . . . You may stay on even till Christmas. Tomorrow or the day after I'll drop in. . . . Keep well! (*Goes away.*)

ANNA PETROVNA. Tomorrow we leave this place. Yes, now I remember. . . . Platonov. . . . So that's why he's running away!

VOINITZEV. Let them do what they like! Let them all run away! I have no wife any longer, and I don't need anything more! I have no wife, *maman!*

ANNA PETROVNA. No, you haven't a wife any longer. . . . But what did he find in this spiritless woman, Sofya? What could he find in her? How indiscriminating these stupid men can be! They're capable of diverting themselves with all sorts of rubbish. . . . Why didn't you keep your eyes on her? Where were your eyes? Cry-baby! You went on whimpering, while someone snatched your wife from under your very nose! And you call yourself a man! . . . Neither you nor Platonov is worth anything!

VOINITZEV. Nothing will help now . . . certainly, not your reproaches. She's no longer mine, and he's

not yours. . . . What good are words here? Leave me in peace, *maman!*

ANNA PETROVNA. But what's to be done? Something must be done! We must try to save . . .

VOINITZEV. Save whom? I'm the only one to be saved. . . . After all, they're happy! (*He sighs.*)

ANNA PETROVNA. You with your logic! It's they, not you, who ought to be saved! Platonov doesn't love her! Do you know it? . . . He doesn't love her, I assure you! What did she tell you? Why don't you answer?

VOINITZEV. She said that she was his mistress.

ANNA PETROVNA. She's his fool, not his mistress! Be silent! Maybe, it's still possible to mend matters. Platonov is the sort to raise a rumpus over a mere kiss or pressure of the hand. The affair hasn't reached the ultimate stage! I'm sure of that. . . .

VOINITZEV. It has reached it.

ANNA PETROVNA. You don't understand anything! (*Enter Grekova.*)

SCENE V.

VOINITZEV, ANNA PETROVNA and GREKOVA.

GREKOVA (*coming in*). So you're here! How are you? (*Gives her hand to Anna Petrovna.*) How are you, Sergey Pavlovitch? . . . I'm sorry. I seem to have come at an inopportune moment. A guest at the improper time is worse than . . . than . . . What do they say? Yes, worse than a Tartar. . . . I want only a minute. . . . You can't possibly guess! (*Laughs.*) I'll show you something, Anna Petrovna. . . . Forgive me, Sergey Pavlovitch, I have a secret to tell Anna Petrovna. . . . (*Takes Anna Petrovna to a side.*) Read this. . . . (*Gives her a note.*) I got this yesterday. . . . Just read it!

ANNA PETROVNA (*scans the note*). Ah . . .

GREKOVA. You see, I took the matter to the Court. . . . (*Puts her head on Anna Petrovna's breast.*) Send for him, Anna Petrovna! Let him come!

ANNA PETROVNA. Is it necessary?

GREKOVA. I'd like to see what's his face like now. . . . What's written on it! Send for him! I beg of you! I have two words to say to him. . . . You've no idea what a mess I've made of things! Don't you listen, Sergey Pavlovitch! (*In a whisper.*) I went to

the director. . . . Mikhail Vassilyevitch will be transferred to another place. . . . What a mess I've made! (*Weeps.*) Send for him! How could I have known that he'd write this letter? Ah, if I could only have known! My God! How I've suffered!

ANNA PETROVNA. Step into the library, my dear! I'll be with you presently. . . . I must have a few words with Sergey Pavlovitch alone. . . .

GREKOVA. Into the library? Good. . . . You will send for him? I want to see the sort of face he has after this letter! You've read it? Give me the letter. I want to put it away. (*Hides the letter.*) My dear . . . I implore you!

ANNA PETROVNA. Good. . . . I'll see you presently!

GREKOVA. Very well. . . . (*Kisses her.*) Don't be angry with me, my dear! I'm suffering! You can't imagine . . . I'm going now, Sergey Pavlovitch! You may continue with your talk! (*Goes.*)

ANNA PETROVNA. I'll learn everything presently. . . . Don't be upset! Perhaps, we can mend matters yet. . . . What a horrible story! Who could have expected it? I'll have a talk with Sofya! I'll question her properly. . . . You've made a mistake. . . . But no! (*Covers her face with her hands.*) No, no . . .

VOINITZEV. No! I've made no mistake! (*Presses his hands to his face.*)

ANNA PETROVNA. All the same, I'll have a talk with her. . . . I'll have a talk with him too. . . .

VOINITZEV. Go, and talk away! Only it will be for nothing! (*Sits down by the table.*) Let's leave this place! I have no hope! Not a straw at which I might clutch. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. I'll find out everything presently. You sit down and have a cry! You'd better lie down, man! Where's Sofya?

VOINITZEV. She must be in her room. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA (*goes out*).

SCENE VI.

VOINITZEV and afterwards PLATONOV.

VOINITZEV. It's almost too much to bear! How long will it drag on? Today, tomorrow, and the day after . . . a week, a month, a year. . . . There'll be no end to this torment! I'd better shoot myself. (*Weeps.*)

PLATONOV (*entering with his arm in a sling*). He sits. . . . He's crying, I think. . . . (*Pause.*) My poor friend! (*Approaches him.*) For God's sake, listen to me! I've not come to justify myself. . . . It's neither for me nor for you to judge me. . . . I've come to implore not for my sake, but for yours. . . . I beg of you, like a brother . . . Loathe me, hate me, if you will! Think of me as you like! Only . . . don't kill yourself! I'm not speaking of revolvers, but . . . generally. . . . Your health is not good. . . . Your grief may finish you. . . . It's I who had better kill myself! Do you want my death? (*Pause.*)

VOINITZEV. [Yes.] I don't want anything!

[PLATONOV. Good. I'll shoot myself. (*Pause.*) With great pleasure. (*Slaps him on the back.*) Even educated people are good for nothing!]

(*Enter Anna Petrovna.*)

SCENE VII.

VOINITZEV, PLATONOV and ANNA PETROVNA.

ANNA PETROVNA. He here? (*Slowly approaches Platonov.*) Platonov, is it all true?

PLATONOV. Yes.

ANNA PETROVNA. He even dares to talk so cold-bloodedly! So it's true. . . . You wretch, didn't you know how low it all was?

PLATONOV. Wretch. . . . You might be more polite. I knew nothing! Throughout the affair I've been conscious of only one thing: I've never wished him even a thousandth part of what he is now suffering!

ANNA PETROVNA. You should have also been aware, my friend, that the wife of a friend should not and cannot be the plaything of another! (*Raises her voice.*) You don't love her! You did it out of mere boredom!

VOINITZEV. Ask him, *maman*, why he came here.

ANNA PETROVNA. It's nasty! Nasty to make game of people! They're only human, even as you are, you ultra-clever man!

VOINITZEV (*jumping up*). Why did he come here? It's insolence! Why have you come here? I know

why you've come, but you won't astonish us with your beautiful phrases!

PLATONOV. Who is "us"?

VOINITZEV. Now I know the value of those beautiful phrases! Leave me in peace, won't you! If you've come to expiate your guilt by making pretty speeches, I want to tell you it can't be done!

PLATONOV. It's true that guilt can't be expiated by pretty speeches. But neither can guilt be proven by shouting and spite. Didn't I say I'd shoot myself?

VOINITZEV. That's not the way to expiate guilt! I don't believe your words now! I have only contempt for your words! There's how a Russian may expiate his guilt! (*Points out of the window.*)

PLATONOV. What's there?

VOINITZEV. There, by the well, lies a man who's expiated his guilt!

PLATONOV. I saw that. . . . You seem to be phrase-making just now, Sergey Pavlovitch! You are suffering from a grief. . . . Why be theatrical about it?

VOINITZEV (*sitting down*). *Maman*, ask him why he came here.

ANNA PETROVNA. Platonov, what do you want here?

PLATONOV. You do your own asking. Why worry your mother? . . . Everything's lost! One's wife's gone, everything's lost, and nothing is left! Beautiful as a day in May is the Sofya-ideal, and it obscures from sight other ideals! Without a woman a man is

like an engine without steam! The steam's gone, and life's lost! Everything's lost! Lost are honour, and human dignity, and aristocracy, everything! The end's come! [Now one may venture forth with a knife, may send a bullet into one's head, may show contempt for another human being, may violate every sacred emotion!]

VOINITZEV. Must I listen to this? Can't you leave me?

PLATONOV. Of course. But don't you humiliate me, Voinitzev! I've not come here to be humiliated. Your grief does not give you the right to stamp on me in the mire! I'm a human being, and I expect to be treated like one. You are unhappy, but all your unhappiness is nothing compared with the suffering which I've undergone since you left me! It was a terrible night for me, Voinitzev, after you left me! [If you could have seen me during that night, then you, thirsting for vengeance, would have considered your own suffering as a paradise.] I swear to you, you philanthropists, that your suffering isn't as terrible as the mere shadow of mine!

ANNA PETROVNA. That's possible, but whose affair is it, your night, and your agony?

PLATONOV. Not yours?

ANNA PETROVNA. I assure you, not mine!

PLATONOV. Yes? Don't lie, Anna Petrovna! (*He sighs.*) Perhaps, you're right in your own fashion. . . . Perhaps . . . But where's one to find human

beings? To whom might one go? (*Covers his face with his hands.*) Where, then, are human beings? No one understands. No one. People are stupid, hard, heartless.

VOINITZEV. I quite understand! I understand you! You are a clever wretch! That's what you are!

PLATONOV. I forgive you, fool, the word. Hold your tongue! (*To Anna Petrovna.*) And why do you stick about here, you lover of strong sensations? Is it curiosity? You're not wanted here! Witnesses aren't necessary!

ANNA PETROVNA. And you have no business here! You can get out! What insolence! You first make a scoundrelly mess, then you come and complain of your sufferings! . . . Anyhow . . . If you don't want to hear anything else, then you'd better go! Do me the favour!

VOINITZEV (*jumping up*). What more can you want from me, I don't understand!

PLATONOV. I see that you don't understand. . . . He's right who, in his grief, goes not to men but to the dram-shop. . . . A thousand times right! (*Goes to the door.*) I'm sorry I've spoken with you . . . it's humiliating! I was stupid enough to think you decent folk. . . . You're like the rest . . . peasants, uncouth savages. (*Slams the door and goes out.*)

[ANNA PETROVNA (*runs up to Voinitzev*). Sergey . . . what was he hinting at? Did you see him yes-

terday? (*Pause.*) Speak! Don't torture me! Speak!

VOINITZEV. It's not necessary. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA (*shaking him by his shoulders*). Speak! What happened?

VOINITZEV. Let me alone. . . . Have some pity!

ANNA PETROVNA. Speak! (*Pause.*)

VOINITZEV. I wanted to kill him. . . . I went for him with a knife. . . . If he hadn't awakened, then . . . He had been sleeping. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. Ah . . . Now I understand. . . . And you dared to call him a wretch! . . .] (*Wrings her hands.*) How appalling! Run this very instant after him! Tell him that . . .

VOINITZEV. What can I tell him?

ANNA PETROVNA. You'll find what to say. . . . Anything! Only run, Sergey! I beg of you! He came here moved by a noble emotion! You should have understood him, but you were stern with him. Run, my dear!

VOINITZEV. I can't! Leave me in peace!

ANNA PETROVNA. But he's not alone to blame! Sergey, we're to blame! We all have passions, not all of us have the strength . . . Run! Tell him something conciliating! Show him that you're a human being! For God's sake. . . . Go on! Be quick!

VOINITZEV. I'll go out of my mind. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. Go out of your mind, only don't dare to humiliate folk! . . . Ah . . . run quickly, for God's sake! (*Weeps.*) Sergey!

VOINITZEV. Leave me in peace, *maman!*

ANNA PETROVNA. I'll go myself. . . . Why shouldn't I? I myself. . . .

PLATONOV (*entering*). Ah-h! (*Sits down on the divan.*)

VOINITZEV (*rises*).

ANNA PETROVNA (*aside*). What's the matter with him? (*Pause.*)

PLATONOV. I have a pain in my hand. . . . I am hungry as the hungriest dog. . . . I am cold. . . . I'm being shaken by a fever. . . . What pain! . . . What more do you want from me? Wasn't that accursed night enough?

VOINITZEV (*approaching Platonov*). Mikhail Vassilyitch, we'll forgive one another. I . . . I'm sure you'll understand my position. We will part company properly. . . . (*Pause.*) I forgive you. . . . On my word of honour! If I could only forget all of this, I should be eternally happy! We shall leave each other in peace!

PLATONOV. Yes. (*Pause.*) No, I've all gone to pieces. The machine's out of order. I want sleep terribly, yet I can't sleep. Humbly I beg your forgiveness. Do what you think best. . . .

VOINITZEV (*walks away from Platonov and sits down by the table*).

PLATONOV. I shan't leave here, not even if you fire the house! Who doesn't like my presence can leave the room. . . . (*Tries to lie down.*) Give me some-

thing warm. . . . Nothing to eat, I mean . . . but a blanket. . . . I'm not going home. It's raining. . . . I'll lie down here.

ANNA PETROVNA (*walking up to Platonov*). You'd better go home, Mikhail Vassilyitch. I'll send you what you need. I might bring it myself. (*Touches his shoulder.*) Go! Go home!

PLATONOV. Who doesn't like my presence can leave the room. . . . Please give me some water to quench my thirst! I want to drink.

ANNA PETROVNA (*gives him a decanter*).

PLATONOV (*drinking from the decanter*). I'm ill. . . . Quite ill, my dear!

ANNA PETROVNA. Go home! (*Puts a hand on his forehead.*) Your head is hot. . . . Go home. I'll send for Triletzky.

PLATONOV (*quietly*). I feel badly, Your Excellency! Badly. . . . Badly. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. Go! I beg of you, go! At all costs, you must go! Do you hear?

(*Enter Sofya Egorovna.*)

SCENE VIII.

The SAME and SOFYA EGOROVNA.

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*entering*). Do take your money back! What's the idea of this magnanimity? I've already told you, it seems . . . (*Sees Platonov.*) You . . . here? Why are you here? (*Pause.*) Strange. . . . What are you doing here?

PLATONOV. I?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Yes, you!

ANNA PETROVNA. We'd better leave, Sergey! (*They leave the room, but after a minute Anna Petrovna returns on her tip-toes and sits down in a corner.*)

PLATONOV. Everything's finished, Sofya!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. What do you mean?

PLATONOV. Just what I say. . . . We'll have a chat about it later.

SOFYA EGOROVNA. What does it all mean?

PLATONOV. [I'm terribly weary, Sofya, terribly weary! There are many of you, and I am alone. . . . Have pity, please!] I don't want anything . . . neither love nor hate . . . I want only peace! I beg of you . . . I don't even want to talk. . . . I've had enough of everything. . . . Please . . .

SOFYA EGOROVNA. What are you saying?

PLATONOV. I say, I've had enough. I don't want any new life. I don't even know what to do with the old one. I want nothing!

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*shrugging her shoulders*). I don't understand. . . .

PLATONOV. You don't understand? The knot's broken . . . that's what!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. You're not going away with me?

PLATONOV. Now, don't allow yourself to get pale, Sofya. . . .

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Are you acting the scoundrel?

PLATONOV. In all likelihood. . . . [I'm ready to do anything to get peace.]

SOFYA EGOROVNA. You infamous wretch! (*Weeps.*)

PLATONOV. I know. . . . I've heard it a hundred times. . . . We might have a talk about it later . . . without witnesses.

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*sobbing*).

PLATONOV. Why don't you go to your room? The most superfluous thing in misfortune is tears. . . . It had to happen, and it happened. . . . Nature has its laws, and our life has its logic. . . . It all happened according to our logic. . . . (*Pause.*)

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*between sobs*). How am I to blame? What is it to me, what is it to my life, which you have taken, that you are tired? What is it to me? Don't you love me any longer?

PLATONOV. Console yourself with something. . . . If only, for example, with the fact that this scandal will serve as a lesson for your future!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. It's not a lesson, but ruin! You dare say this to me? It's downright low!

PLATONOV. Why cry? Like everything else, it's become repugnant to me! (*He shouts.*) Can't you see! I'm ill!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. You swore to me, you implored . . . you were the first to begin, and now you've come here! Have I become repugnant to you? Did you want me only for a fortnight? I hate you! I can't look at you! Get out from here! (*Weeps.*)

ANNA PETROVNA. Platonov!

PLATONOV. Eh?

ANNA PETROVNA. You'd better go!

PLATONOV (*rises and slowly walks to the door*).

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Wait. . . . Don't go yet! You . . . isn't it so? You, perhaps, aren't sober. . . . Sit down, think it over! (*Catches him by the shoulders.*)

PLATONOV. I've already sat, and thought. Get rid of me, Sofya Egorovna! I'm not your man! I've rotted so long, my soul has long since become a skeleton, and it's too late to resurrect me! Far better to dig me in further, so that I might not contaminate the air! Believe me for the last time!

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*wringing her hands*). What am I

to do? What can I do? Teach me! Or I'll die. I won't survive this piece of infamy! Not five minutes! I'll kill myself. . . . (*Sits down in an armchair in a corner of the room.*) What are you doing with me? (*Grows hysterical.*)

VOINITZEV (*approaching Sofya Egorovna*). Sofya!

ANNA PETROVNA. God knows what's happening! Calm yourself, Sofya! Bring some water, Sergey!

VOINITZEV. Sofya! Don't torture yourself. . . . Stop it! (*To Platonov.*) Why are you waiting, Mikhail Vassilyitch? Go, for God's sake!

ANNA PETROVNA. Enough, Sofya, enough!

PLATONOV (*going up to Sofya Egorovna*). Well . . . why? Eh-h . . . (*Quickly walks away from her.*) What idiocy!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Go away from me! Everyone! I don't need your help! (*To Anna Petrovna.*) Go away! I hate you! I know to whom I'm obligated for all this! It'll cost you dearly!

ANNA PETROVNA. Sh-h . . . Your abuse is wasted.

SOFYA EGOROVNA. If it weren't for your vicious authority over him, he wouldn't have ruined me! (*Weeps.*) Go away! (*To Voinitzev.*) You too . . . go away!

VOINITZEV (*goes from her, sits down by the table and presses his hands to his head*).

ANNA PETROVNA (*to Platonov*). Go! How many times must you be told? You are an amazing idiot today! What more do you want?

PLATONOV (*closing his ears*). Where am I to go? I've become numb with cold. . . . (*Walks to the door.*) If only the devil would take me . . . the sooner the better! (*Enter Triletzky.*)

SCENE IX.

The SAME and TRILETZKY.

TRILETZKY (*in the doorway*). I'll give you such an announcement that you won't know yourself!

VOICE OF YAKOV. Master has given orders . . .

TRILETZKY. Go and kiss your master! He's as big an ass as you are! (*Enters.*) Isn't he here either? (*Flings himself on the divan.*) Terrible! This . . . this . . . (*Jumps up.*) Oh-h! (*To Platonov.*) The tragedy is coming to a climax, tragedian! To a climax!

PLATONOV. What do you want?

TRILETZKY. Having your fill here, are you? Why aren't you home, unfortunate man? Aren't you ashamed? Aren't you conscious of your sin? Still philosophizing here, are you? Reading sermons?

PLATONOV. Talk like a human being, Nikolai! What do you want?

TRILETZKY. You're a beast! (*Sits down and covers his face with his hands.*) What a misfortune! Who could have foreseen it?

PLATONOV. What's happened?

TRILETZKY. What's happened? You don't even know? It's none of your affair? You have no time?

ANNA PETROVNA. Nikolai Ivanovitch!

PLATONOV. Is it Sasha? Speak, Nikolai! Only this was lacking! What's the matter with her?

TRILETZKY. She poisoned herself with matches!

PLATONOV. What are you saying?

TRILETZKY (*shouts*). She poisoned herself with matches! (*Jumps up.*) Here, read! Read! (*Pushes a note to Platonov's very eyes.*) Read, philosopher!

PLATONOV (*reads*). "It is sinful to remember suicides, but please remember me. I deprived myself of life during illness. Misha, love Kolya and my brother as I love you. Don't abandon your father. Live according to the law, Kolya, God will bless you, as I have blessed you with my maternal blessing. Forgive me, a sinner. The key to the chest of drawers is in the woollen dress." My treasure! A sinner? She a sinner! This is all that was lacking! (*Presses his hands to his head.*) Poisoned herself. . . . (*Pause.*) Sasha poisoned herself. . . . Where is she? Listen! I'm going to her! (*Tears the sling from his arm.*) I'll . . . give her new life!

TRILETZKY (*lying down on the divan, face down*). Before you can give people new life, you must learn how to preserve the old! You must learn not to kill!

PLATONOV. Kill. . . . Why, fool do you say that? Have I killed her? Have I desired her death? (*Weeps.*) Poisoned herself. . . . That alone was lacking, in order to drive over me with a wheel, like some dog! If it's a punishment, then . . . (*Flour-*

ishes his fist.) It is a cruel, immoral punishment! . . . It's beyond my strength! Why did it happen? Let us admit, I am a sinner. . . . Still, I'm a living being! Look at me now, all of you! Look! Am I a pleasing sight?

TRILETZKY (*jumping up*). Yes, yes, yes . . . We shall weep now. . . . What you want is a good drubbing! Put your hat on! We're going! A husband! A good husband! Ruined a woman neither for one thing nor another! What's he brought her to! And these people are keeping him here! They like him! An original man, an interesting subject, with noble grief in his eyes! And with traces of former beauty in his face! But now let's start! We'll see the sort of mess this original man, this interesting subject, has made!

PLATONOV. Only no words. . . . Words are not necessary!

TRILETZKY. It's your luck I happened to run in this early morning! D'you know what would have happened, if I hadn't come just in the nick of time? She'd have died! Do you understand that or not? You usually understand everything except the most ordinary things! . . . If you had only babbled less with your cursed tongue and had done a bit more listening, then you wouldn't have had all this unhappiness! I wouldn't exchange her for ten clever fellows like you! Let's go!

VOINITZEV. Don't shout! Ah-h . . . I'm weary of you all!

TRILETZKY. Let's go!

PLATONOV. Wait. . . . Then she . . . hasn't died, you say?

TRILETZKY. Would you have liked to see her die?

PLATONOV (*shouting*). Then she hasn't died! I can't get it into my head. . . . She hasn't died? (*Embraces Triletzky.*) So she's alive! (*Laughs.*) Alive!

ANNA PETROVNA. I don't understand! . . . Triletzky, please talk sense! Everyone seems particularly stupid today! What's the meaning of this letter?

TRILETZKY. She wrote this letter. . . . If it weren't for me, she'd have died. . . . But now she's frightfully ill! I'm not sure that her organism will withstand it. . . . If she should die, then . . . Go away from me, please!

PLATONOV. How you've frightened me! My God! She's still alive! So you haven't let her die! My dear fellow! (*Kisses Triletzky.*) Dear fellow! (*Laughs.*) I've never believed in medicine before, and now I believe even in you! How is she now? Weak? Unwell? We will bring her to herself!

TRILETZKY. It's a question whether she will survive.

PLATONOV. But why didn't you say that she was alive? Anna Petrovna, my dear, a glass of water, please, and I'm a happy man! Forgive me, all! Anna Petrovna! . . . I'll go out of my mind with happiness! (*Kisses Anna Petrovna's hand.*) Sasha is alive. . . . Water, water . . . my dear!

ANNA PETROVNA (*goes out with an empty decanter and presently returns with it full*).

PLATONOV (*to Triletzky*). Let's go to her! We must put her on her feet! . . . Who should go on living on this earth if not she? Let's go! But, no . . . wait! My head goes round. . . . I am terribly ill. . . . Wait. . . . (*Sits down on the divan.*) I'll rest a bit, then we'll start. . . . Is she very weak?

TRILETZKY. Very. . . . He's overjoyed! Why, Heaven knows!

ANNA PETROVNA. I too was frightened. One ought to talk more sensibly. Drink! (*Hands Platonov the water.*)

PLATONOV (*drinking avidly*). Thank you, dear! I am a wretch, an extraordinary wretch! (*To Triletzky.*) Sit beside me! (*Triletzky sits down.*) You must be tired. . . . Thank you, my friend. Did she swallow much?

TRILETZKY. Enough to have dispatched her to the other world.

PLATONOV. Well, thank God! . . . How my hand hurts! . . . Please give me more water. I'm rather ill myself, Nikolai! I can scarcely hold my head. . . . I'm seeing things. . . . I must have a fever. . . . I feel terribly ill!

TRILETZKY (*feels his pulse*).

ANNA PETROVNA (*quietly, to Triletzky*). Take him home, Nikolai Ivanovitch! I myself will look in today and have a chat with Alexandra Ivanovna. What

ever put it into her head to frighten us so? Is all danger past?

TRILETZKY. It's too early to say. She hadn't succeeded with the poison, but, generally speaking, she's not what she might be!

PLATONOV. What did you give her?

TRILETZKY. What I should. (*Rises.*) Come, let's start!

PLATONOV. What did you give to Anna Petrovna just now?

TRILETZKY. You're delirious. . . . Come!

PLATONOV. Yes, we must start . . . (*Rises.*) Sergey Pavlovitch, chuck it! (*Sits down.*) You seem weighed down with grief. It's as if someone had stolen the sun from the earth! You once studied philosophy too! Be Socrates! Eh? Sergey Pavlovitch! (*Quietly.*) Perhaps, I don't know what I'm talking about. . . .

TRILETZKY (*putting his hand on Platonov's head*). Yes, get ill now! Illness may help to purge your conscience!

ANNA PETROVNA. Platonov! Go, and God be with you! You might send for another doctor for consultation. . . . In any case, I'll send one along. . . . Please reassure Alexandra Ivanovna!

PLATONOV. Anna Petrovna, there's a tiny piano crawling on your breast! (*Laughs.*) It's comic! I'm ill, Nikolai. . . . I'm in earnest. . . . I'm not joking. . . . Let's start! (*Enter Ivan Ivanovitch.*)

SCENE X.

The SAME and IVAN IVANOVITCH.

IVAN IVANOVITCH (*all dishevelled, in a dressing-gown*). My Sasha! (*Weeps.*)

TRILETZKY. All that's been lacking here . . . your tears! Get out! Why have you come here?

IVAN IVANOVITCH. She's dying! She wants to confess! I'm afraid, afraid. . . . Oh, how I'm afraid! (*Goes up to Platonov.*) Misha dear! I implore you in the name of the Lord and all the Saints! You dear, clever, splendid, honest man! Go to her, tell her that you love her! Chuck all these nasty romances! I implore you on my knees! You see, she's dying! I have only her, only her! If she dies, I am lost! Tell her that you love her, that you consider her your wife! Console her, for Christ's sake! Misha dear! There's sometimes a lie in salvation. . . . God sees you are just, but lie for the sake of saving someone dear to you! Come with me to her, do this kindness! Do me this charity, for Christ's sake. . . . I am an old man!

PLATONOV. All right, Colonel! (*Laughs.*) We'll cure Sasha, and have a drink together! Oh, how I want to drink!

IVAN IVANOVITCH. Let's go, my noble fellow. . . . Two words from you, and she is saved! No doctor will save her! It's her soul that is in agony!

TRILETZKY. Father, leave this room for a minute! (*Leading his father from the room by a sleeve.*) Who told you she's dying? Where did you get the idea? She's not in danger! Wait a bit in the other room. We'll shortly go to her all together. Aren't you ashamed to appear in a strange house looking like this?

IVAN IVANOVITCH (*to Anna Petrovna*). It's sinful, Diana! God won't forgive you! He's a young, inexperienced man. . . .

TRILETZKY (*pushing him into the next room*). Wait there! (*To Platonov.*) Do you want to go?

PLATONOV. I am terribly ill. . . . I'm ill, Nikolai!

TRILETZKY. I'm asking you, do you want to go, or not?

PLATONOV (*rising*). Only less words. . . . My mouth is so dry, what shall I do? Yes, we'll go. . . . I think I've come here without a hat. . . . (*Sits down again.*) Do look for my hat!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. He should have foreseen this. I gave myself to him, without a question. . . . I knew that I was killing my husband, but I . . . stopped before nothing! (*She rises and walks over to Platonov.*) What have you done with me? (*Weeps.*)

TRILETZKY (*presses his hands to his head*). A commission of investigation! (*Paces up and down.*)

ANNA PETROVNA. Keep calm, Sofya! It's not the proper time. . . . He is ill.

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Is one to be allowed to make mock of a human life? (*Sits down beside Platonov.*) My whole life is now ruined. . . . I'm no longer alive. . . . Save me, Platonov! It isn't too late! (*Pause.*)

ANNA PETROVNA (*weeping*). Sofya . . . what do you want? There'll be plenty of time. . . . What can he say to you now? Haven't you heard . . . haven't you heard?

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Platonov . . . once more I ask you . . . (*Weeps.*) No?

PLATONOV (*moves away from her*).

SOFYA EGOROVNA. No, no . . . Very well, then. . . . (*Falls on her knees.*) Platonov!

ANNA PETROVNA. That's too much, Sofya! You mustn't do this! No one is worth it . . . not on your knees. . . . (*Raises her from the floor and forces her into a seat.*) You . . . are a woman!

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*weeping*). Tell him. . . . Prevail on him. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA. Call to your aid all the strength of your mind. . . . You must be firm. . . . You're a woman! Enough! Go to your own room! (*Pause.*) Go, and lie down. . . . (*To Triletzky.*) Nikolai Ivanovitch! What's to be done?

TRILETZKY. We must ask dear Misha about this! (*Paces up and down.*)

ANNA PETROVNA. Let's take her to her bed! Sergey!

Nikolai Ivanovitch! You might at least lend a hand!

VOINITZEV (*rises, and approaches Sofya Egorovna*).

TRILETZKY. Yes, we'll take her to her room. I must give her something to soothe her.

ANNA PETROVNA. I myself should be glad to take chloroform. . . . (*To Voinitzev.*) Be a man, Sergey! Don't lose your head! I don't feel better than you, but I manage to stand on my feet. . . . Come, Sofya! What a day! (*They lead Sofya Egorovna.*) Be a man, Sergey! Let us be human beings!

VOINITZEV. I'll try, *maman.* I'm doing what I can. . . .

TRILETZKY. Don't grieve, brother Sergey! You're neither the first, nor yet the last!

VOINITZEV. I'll try. . . . Yes, I'll try. . . . (*Exit.*)

SCENE XI.

PLATONOV and afterwards GREKOVA.

PLATONOV (*alone*). A cigarette, Nikolai, and some water! (*Glances round.*) What's become of them? Well, I must start. . . . (*Pause.*) [What a mess I've made of things!] I've ruined weak women . . . they were all wholly blameless. . . . It would have been different if I had killed them under the pressure of terrific passions . . . in Spanish fashion . . . but I've killed them stupidly, in the Russian manner. . . . (*Waves a hand before his eyes.*) *Mouches volantes* . . . little clouds . . . I'm growing delirious. . . . I feel crushed. . . . (*Covers his face with his hands.*) Shame, burning shame. . . . What pain shame can give! (*He rises.*) I was cold, hungry, worn out, done for, and I had played my wretched part . . . and I came into this house. . . . They gave me a warm corner, dressed me, were kind to me. . . . I paid them well! Still, I am ill. . . . I feel badly. . . . I ought to kill myself. . . . (*Walks up to the table.*) Choose . . . here is a whole arsenal . . . (*Picks up a revolver.*) Hamlet feared dreams . . . I fear . . . life! What will I be if I go on living? Shame will gnaw at me. . . .

(*Puts the revolver to his temples.*) *Finita la comedia!* One clever beast the less! Christ, forgive my sins! (*Pause.*) Well? Soon death will come. . . . What do I care now if my hand hurts. . . . (*Pause.*) I haven't the strength! (*Places the revolver on the table.*) I want to live. . . . (*Sits down on the divan.*) (*Enter Grekova.*) I wish I had some water. . . . Where's Triletzky? (*Sees Grekova.*) Who is this? Ah-a-a . . . (*Laughs.*) My wicked enemy. . . . Are we going to judgment tomorrow? (*Pause.*)

GREKOVA. Of course not. After your letter we are no longer enemies.

PLATONOV. It's all the same. I'd like some water.

GREKOVA. Water? What's the matter?

PLATONOV. I am ill. . . . I have a fever. . . . I was pleased. . . . It was clever. It would have been still more clever if you'd had nothing to do with me. . . . I wanted to shoot myself. . . . (*Laughs.*) I didn't succeed. . . . An instinct. . . . The mind pursues its own, nature its own. . . . You're a clever girl! (*Kisses her hand.*) Listen. . . . Do you want to listen to me?

GREKOVA. Yes, yes, yes . . .

PLATONOV. Take me to you! I'm ill, I want water, I'm suffering unbearable torture! I want to sleep, there's no place where . . . If only I could lie down in a barn, if only in some corner. . . . I want water, and some quinine. Please! (*Stretches out a hand.*)

GREKOVA. Of course, you may come to me! With

pleasure! You may live at my house as long as you like. . . . But you don't know all I've done! Come, let's go!

PLATONOV. *Merci,* my clever little girl. . . . A cigarette, some water, and a bed! Is it raining?

GREKOVA. Yes.

PLATONOV. We shall have to go in the rain. . . . We shan't go to a court of justice. Peace! (*Looks at her.*)

GREKOVA. Come! I have a covered carriage.

PLATONOV. You are lovely. . . . Why do you blush? I shan't touch you. But I'll kiss your cool hand. . . . (*Kisses her hand and pulls her to him.*)

GREKOVA (*sitting down on his knees*). No . . . don't! (*Rises.*) Let's go. . . . Your face is strange. . . . Let go my hand!

PLATONOV. I'm ill. (*Rises.*) We'll go. . . . On the cheek . . . (*Kisses her cheek.*) No ulterior motive. I can't . . . Anyhow, it's all nonsense. Let's go, Marya Efimovna! And, please, the sooner the better! Here's the revolver with which I wanted to shoot myself. . . . On the cheek . . . (*Kisses her cheek.*) I'm delirious, I know . . . but I see your face. . . . I love all human beings! All! I love you too. . . . Human beings have been, above all else, dear to me. . . . I didn't want to hurt anyone, and I've hurt all. . . . All. . . . (*Kisses her hand.*)

GREKOVA. I understood everything. . . . I understand your position. . . . It's Sofya . . . yes?

PLATONOV. Sofi, Zizi, Mimi, Masha. . . . There are many of you. . . . I love you all. I was at the University, and I used to say kind words to the fallen . . . in the Theatre Square. . . . The people were in the theatre, and I in the Square. . . . There was one . . . Shall I show you her letters?

GREKOVA. What's the matter with you?

PLATONOV. You think I'm out of my wits? No, it's this way. . . . It's fever . . . delirium . . . Ask Triletzky. (*Takes her by the shoulders.*) They all love me. . . . All! It would happen, I'd humiliate them . . . and they love you even then. . . . There's Grekova, for one. . . . I humiliated her by pushing her on to a table, and she loves me. You're Grekova herself, as it happens. . . . I'm sorry. . . .

GREKOVA. What gives you pain?

PLATONOV. Platonov gives me pain. You love me, don't you? You love me? Be frank. . . . I don't want anything. . . . Only tell me, do you love me?

GREKOVA. Yes. . . . (*Puts her head on his breast.*) Yes. . . .

PLATONOV (*kissing her head*). They all love me. . . . As soon as I get well, I'll corrupt them. . . . I used to say kind words to them at first, and now I corrupt them. . . .

GREKOVA. It's all the same to me. . . . I don't want anything. . . . You are the only human being there is. I don't want to know any others! You can do

with me as you like. . . . You are the only human being there is! (*Weeps.*)

PLATONOV. I understand King Œdipus who pierced his own eyes! How low I am, and how deeply I am conscious of my lowness! Go away from me! It isn't worth it. . . . I am ill. (*Frees himself.*) I'm going away soon. . . . Excuse me, Marya Efimovna! I'll go out of my mind! Where's Triletzky? (*Enter Sofya Egorovna.*)

SCENE XII.

The SAME and SOFYA EGOROVNA.

SOFYA EGOROVNA (*goes to the table and searches for something*).

GREKOVA (*seizing Platonov by the hand*). Sh-h . . . (*Pause.*)

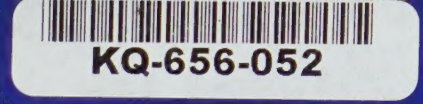
SOFYA EGOROVNA (*takes the revolver, shoots at Platonov and misses him*).

GREKOVA (*places herself between Platonov and Sofya Egorovna*). What are you doing? (*She shouts.*) Come here! Quick!

SOFYA EGOROVNA. Let me . . . (*Evades Grekova and, holding the revolver close to Platonov's breast, pulls the trigger.*) Wait, wait. . . . How is it . . . (*He falls. Anna Petrovna, Ivan Ivanovitch, Triletzky and Voinitzev come running in.*)

CURTAIN

THE END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